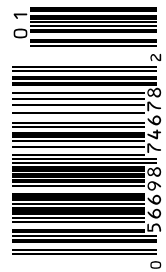


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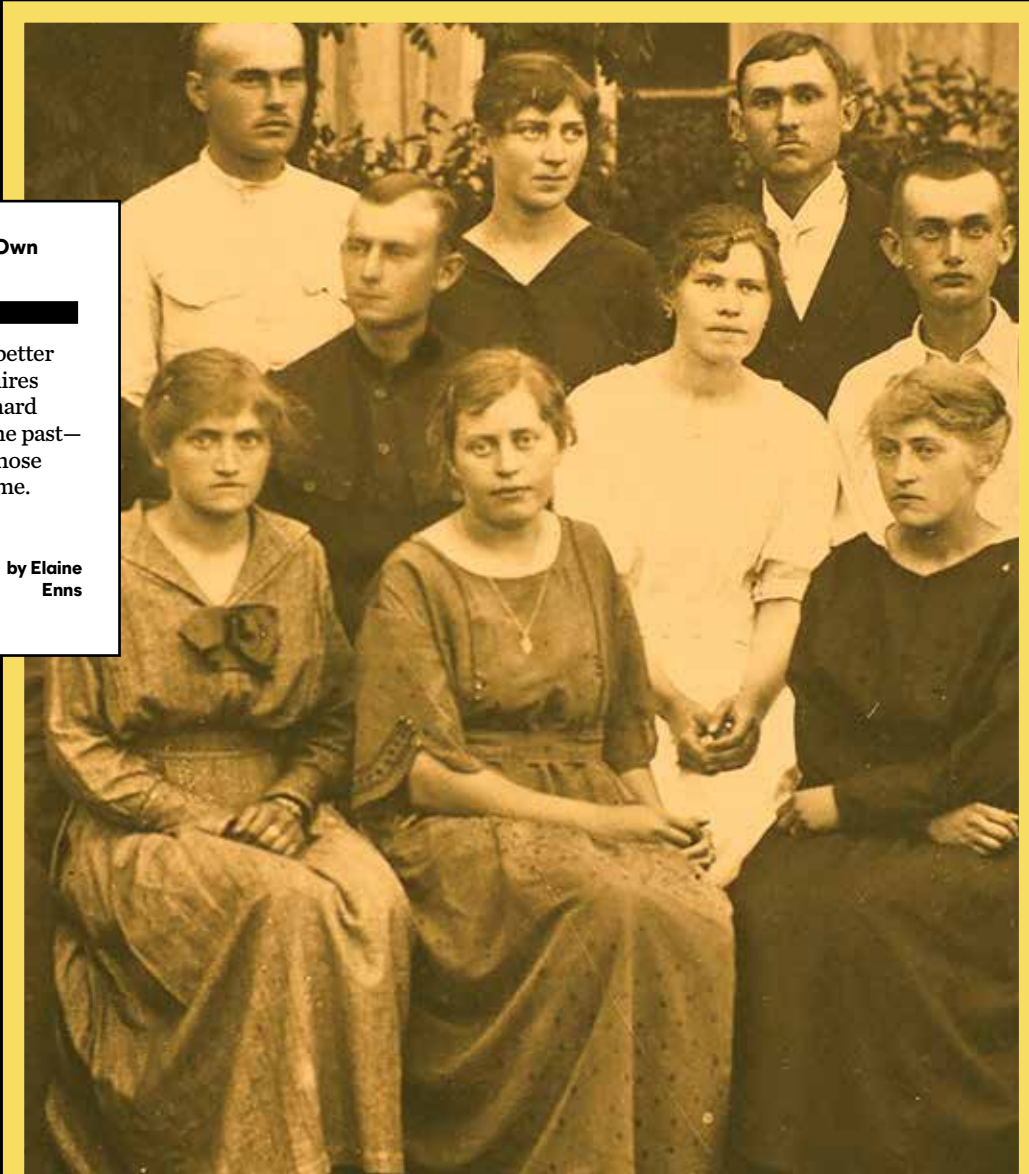
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"IT IS A PLACE WHERE TWO TRAUMATIZED PEOPLES LIVED SIDE BY SIDE."

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by Elaine Enns



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HOPE IN ACTION

In a year defined by a global pandemic, protests, and deep polarization, you have made it possible to:



inspire hope and offer sustenance



deepen spiritual resilience and put faith into action for social justice



2020 by the numbers:

With your generous support, this year Sojourners expanded **our campaigns**, mobilized **more leaders**, and produced **important resources**, all while navigating the unexpected transition to a fully remote office.

- We trained **1,000+ young pastors and influencers** to engage their congregations and social media networks on voter protection, reaching more than **2 million people**.
- We launched our Faith-Rooted Advocates Network, coaching **hundreds of community leaders and congregations** to hold courageous conversations around pressing social justice issues.
- **Nearly 100 faith leaders** completed our new seminary-based certificate programs advancing immigrant rights and addressing racialized policing.
- **Nine next-gen leaders** joined our yearlong fellowship program, now in its **37th year**; we hired **4 fellows** from the previous cohort full time, bringing our staff count to **49**.
- We are inspiring more people than ever, with sojo.net surpassing **6 million visitors** and many millions more engaging on social media and through earned media.
- Nearly **45,000 sojourners** subscribe to our weekday Verse & Voice email devotionals, receiving regular reminders of hope.
- Our *Soul of the Nation* podcast has more than **40 dynamic, timely interviews** with leaders that include Episcopal Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and Minnesota Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan.

THANK YOU!

From the Editor

For weeks (that felt like years), many of us were torn between almost-obsessive tracking of polls, debates, tweets, and divisive campaign rhetoric—and a heartfelt desire for anything-but-the-election. Because, of course, so much of life isn't wrapped up in partisan electoral politics, as important as elected officials and public policies are for the well-being of all of us and our earth. This issue of *Sojourners* reflects that tension: While we feature perspectives on the presidential election and what's ahead politically, we also offer reflections on matters not bound by four-year cycles.

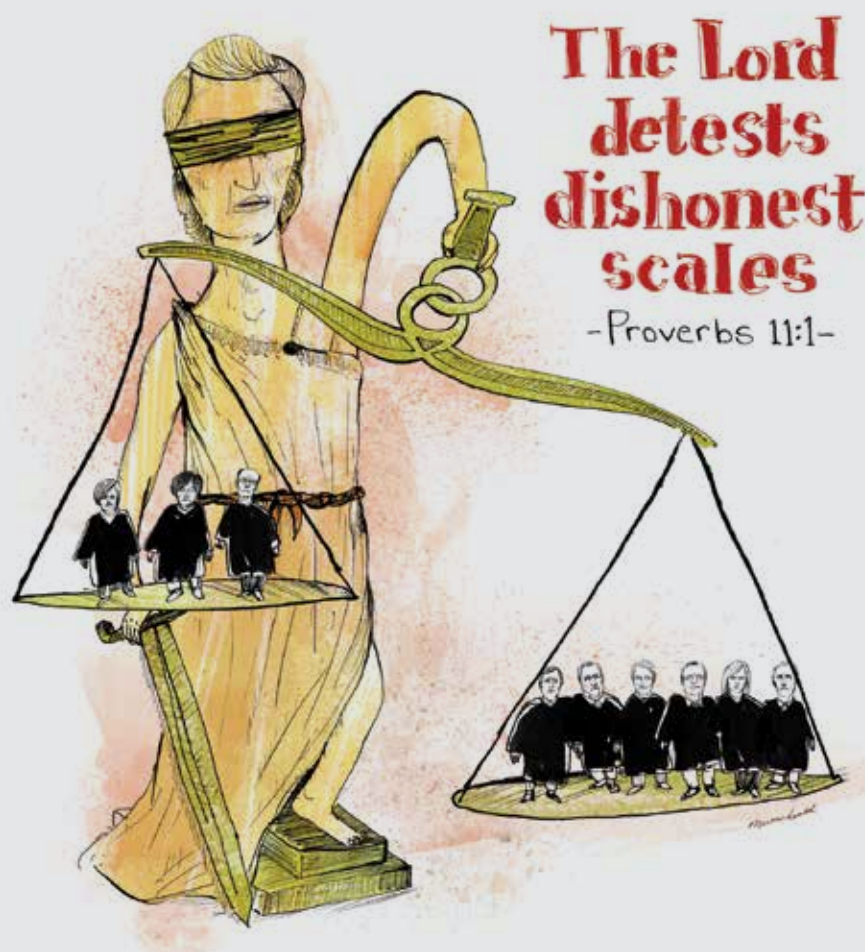
The Indigenous concept of *buen vivir* (good living), as Néstor Medina explains, encapsulates a holistic vision, rooted in community and in relation to the earth—a vision that has much to teach us about the gospel itself. And Elaine Enns attests that a “discipleship of decolonization,” based on an honest facing of “ghosts” past and present and an enduring commitment to rectify the resultant harms, offers not only liberation but also hope for a more equitable future. That work goes on, in election years and beyond.

RESPONSE

Democracy on the Brink

In the December 2020 issue (“Five Lessons From 2020”), Lisa Sharon Harper asked how we came to the brink of losing democracy. “A failed educational system. False and power-hungry religious leaders. Politicians who love themselves more than our nation,” wrote Jon R. Heckerman. Alyssa Bonilla added, “A hierarchical economic system, which is designed to create a few winners and many losers.” Lori White Burzlaff attributed it to the corrupting nature of power: “We must make sure we spread the power of our elected officials to all people ... All humans deserve equal rights, equal power, and equal justice under the law.” Schuyler Halsey stressed that, beyond voting, we must “organize and protest. Change the system that refuses to listen to our immediate needs.”

Write us: response@sojo.net



"WE NEED,
IN EVERY
COMMUNITY,
A GROUP
OF ANGELIC
TROUBLE-
MAKERS."

Bayard Rustin
American civil rights activist

CONTRIBUTING



Néstor Medina

"Everywhere, men and women are rising up, unwilling to accept the present system of economics subsidized by the racialized, the poor, and the earth," says scholar and Pentecostal minister Néstor Medina. He explores how the Indigenous concept of *buen vivir* (p. 34), of radical interdependence, flips that system of extraction and accumulation. "These peoples and Indigenous communities across the planet that struggle for restoring our relationship with the rest of creation give me hope."



Da'Shawn Mosley

In a time of limited face-to-face interaction, the arts are one of the few places people can still experience others' lives in ways that elicit empathy, says *Sojourners* culture editor Da'Shawn Mosley. "In a way it's like church. It's one place where you go in and you expect yourself to be spiritually and emotionally changed." Through the artists and reviews (like *Love Child's Hotbed*, p. 39) featured in these pages, Mosley shows readers how integral the arts are to social movements—and to faith.

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24%

Increase in voter turnout
among people ages 18-29
compared to 2016

40%

Trump voters who were
white evangelicals

15%

Share of U.S. population
that is white and
evangelical

OUR MISSION

The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

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1

HEARTS & MINDS

BY JIM WALLIS

THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN

The people have spoken, democracy has worked, and it is time for a peaceful transfer of power. Joe Biden and Kamala Harris have fairly won the presidential election, and I am hopeful about their commitment to both healing and change. We should accept the results, and call upon our faith communities to do the same, in order to help our nation move forward together.

We should be grateful for and inspired by the ways our faith communities worked for free, fair, and safe elections in 2020. Thousands of multiracial and interfaith poll chaplains helped to protect vulnerable voters from both suppression and intimidation at the polls and helped secure this election.

Racism was recognized as a religious issue in this election—and we must commit to a much deeper, and even uncomfortable, conversation in the body of Christ about the great and painful divisions be-

**WE ARE CALLED TO
PROTECT THE MOST
VULNERABLE WHILE
ADVANCING THE
COMMON GOOD.**

“ALL SHOULD CELEBRATE THAT A BLACK WOMAN, A WOMAN OF SOUTH ASIAN DESCENT, IS OUR NEXT VICE PRESIDENT.”



Jim Wallis is founder and ambassador of Sojourners.

tween white Christians and believers of color that this election has again revealed. Addressing systemic racism, economic injustice, inhumane immigration policies, and climate change—all of this is required as expressions of our faith. Let us begin with healing our nation from the COVID-19 pandemic and then from our polarized divisions with grace and love and the reconciliation that comes from working together to build a more racially just and inclusive America.

As Christians, we are called to love our neighbors and our enemies and prioritize protecting the most vulnerable while advancing the common good. This is a moment in which both political and faith leaders must find the courage and resolve to put our country and the common good over political idolatry and

naked ambition. Leaders must stop making reckless statements about election fraud, without evidence, which continue to stoke partisan and political flames.

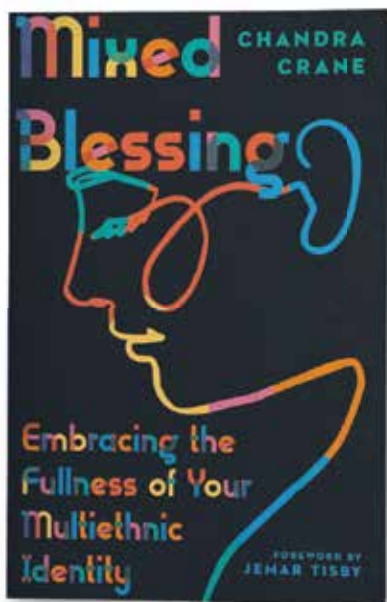
As of this writing, President Trump—with no credible evidence of irregularities or fraud—has refused to concede the election and has repeated his longstanding allegations of improprieties favoring his opponent. This was not unexpected, but it has been dangerous and distressing, both for the short-term prospect of a peaceful transfer of power and for the long-term harm he is continuing to do to public trust, to the future of democracy in America, and even to national and global security. It is yet another assault on the health of the nation and another example of Trump putting his own interests ahead of the people.

All Americans should celebrate the historic firsts: A Black woman, a woman of South Asian descent, is our next vice president. Harris' victory is one for America's future.

What Trump won't accept does not and should not matter. Our democracy is not determined by him; it is determined by the people. We remain committed to ensuring the peaceful transfer of power and will work faithfully and persistently to restore democracy and decency to our country.

It is time for all people of faith and conscience to defend democracy itself, which has been under real threat for the last four years. It is time to move forward together. ♦

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JEMAR TISBY,
from the foreword



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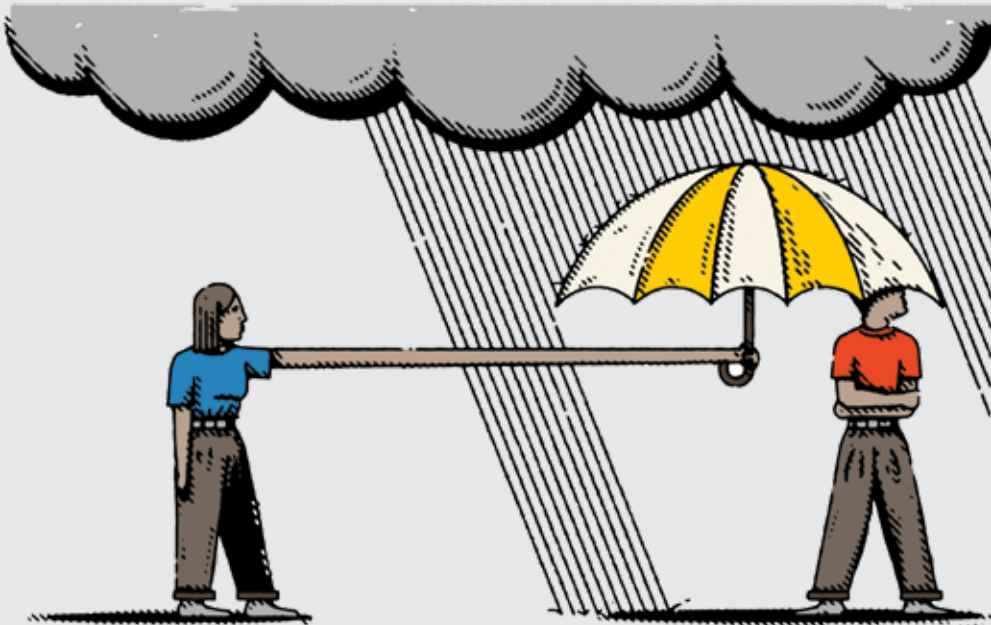
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ACROSS THE GREAT DIVIDE

The difficult path of mitigation and healing
in the wake of four traumatic years.



2

The election did not, as many had hoped, offer a resounding renunciation of Trumpism and its often-explicit white supremacist ideology. On the contrary, millions more people than four years ago voted for a man (and a worldview) with few illusions about his nature, showing a willingness to ignore, if not condone, racism, misogyny, and xenophobia.

Trump's presidency made unarguably clear, for those who harbored doubts, that racism and white supremacy are not restricted to a small, inconsequential fragment of society tucked away in the shadows. Now, it's distressingly but importantly clear that a very significant minority of voters either harbors these views explicitly or is fine with ignoring or downplaying them for their own perceived advantage. As painful as that is to acknowledge, it's actually a step in the right direction, since a problem cannot be addressed until it is first named.

A primary task before us as we emerge from the destructive tumult of the past four years is to mitigate the damage done to so many people and to our earth itself. "Mitigation," by

definition, includes “reducing the harmful effects” of actions taken. It’s considered a stage of emergency management, which feels about right.

One of our missions as Christians is to be healers in the world, and that includes actively working to repair the toxic ruptures and divisions that have been intentionally inflamed by those who have sought to turn genuine differences into hostile and supposedly irreconcilable enmity. The breach in the body politic also rends the body of Christ, as once again white evangelicals provided a significant base of Trump’s support. Half of white Catholics joined them, even as the nation elected its second Catholic president. As political scientist John Green put it, “the level of polarization based on religiosity is still very important.”

Pursuing a path of healing, of course, does not mean papering over the harm that has been done or the ongoing trauma it has caused. In fact, it means the opposite: The injurious actions, and their structural bases, must be addressed and reversed.

One of the most difficult aspects of that path is the recognition that those Christian Trump voters, whether we like it or not, are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Despite the very human impulse to dismiss or demonize them—to treat them as “the other”—we’re called instead to act as if we believe that those with whom we disagree, those whose actions have caused such harm, are part of the universal church.

For theologian and scripture scholar Walter Brueggemann, that includes reflecting on the reasons that some Christians continue to back what seems to be such an anti-gospel agenda. “Obviously, the support for Trump is complex, but I think at bottom it is resentment; he is a master at mobilizing resentment,” Brueggemann told *Sojourners* the day President-elect Joe Biden’s victory was announced. “We have to give thought about how we respond to people who are set deep in resentment. Our work in that regard has to do with ... hearing the narrative of resentment and outflanking that narrative with generosity that begins to treat people like neighbors. That does not mean we have to compromise any of our passion for justice, but we have to pay attention to who people are.”

Brueggemann pointed to Jesus’ teach-

**OUR YARDSTICK FOR JUDGING
THE ACTIONS OF THE BIDEN
ADMINISTRATION CAN NEVER
BE, “WELL, HE’S BETTER THAN
TRUMP.”**

ing in the Sermon on the Mount: “The hard work is loving enemies, and I think converting and transforming them precisely by that kind of action.” While turning the other cheek isn’t often the first impulse of those who have been repeatedly slapped, responding to hatred with love does have the almost-inexplicable ability to “heap burning coals” on our so-called enemies and, sometimes, bring about surprising transformations. Such behavior is at heart a form of witness, an invitation, and a call to conversion to our fellow believers—and to ourselves.

Finally, as sojourners in the land (Hebrews 11:9) and those with loyalties to a higher, eternal power, we’re called to remember that we are the “loyal opposition” to any administration. Our yardstick for judging the actions of the Biden administration can never be, “Well, he’s better than Trump,” or even, “That’s the best we can expect from a divided government.” Rather, we will continue to measure against the biblical standards of justice for the poor, welcome to the stranger, and healing of the nations—because, even while we work for a more just society, in the words of the West African hymn, “we have another world in view.” ❖

Jim Rice is editor of *Sojourners* magazine.

Invite Rev. Adam Taylor to speak.

Rev. Adam Taylor is president of Sojourners and author of *Mobilizing Hope: Faith-Inspired Activism for a Post-Civil Rights Generation*. He is recognized as a leader in addressing a range of peace and justice issues and can speak on global human rights, faith and politics, faith-inspired activism, racial and economic justice, and more. You can invite Adam to speak to your congregation, students, or co-workers at [**sojo.net/AdamSpeak**](https://sojo.net/AdamSpeak).

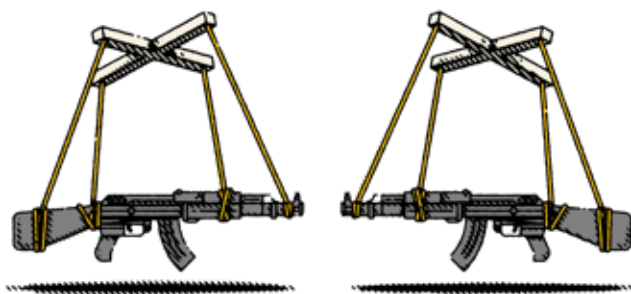
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COMMENTARY

BY STEPHEN ZUNES



A LEGACY OF COLONIALISM

The ceasefire between Azerbaijan and Armenia will, hopefully, stop bloodshed. But that's not enough.

The war between Armenia and Azerbaijan this past autumn was an avoidable tragedy.

The disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region has been populated since at least the second century B.C.E. by Armenians, one of the world's oldest Christian civilizations. The Muslim Azeris and others have lived there and in neighboring areas for centuries as well, and the region was ethnically mixed (albeit majority Armenian) when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

Stalin's divide-and-rule policy for drawing borders made Nagorno-Karabakh a theoretically "autonomous region" within the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic. As the Soviet Union was breaking up and Azerbaijani persecution of ethnic Armenians increased, the Armenian and Nagorno-Karabakh governments, with widespread support of their respective populations, demanded the transfer of the region to Armenia.

When Azerbaijan refused, Armenia seized the territory by force in the 1990s—along with large swaths of western Azerbaijan, populated primarily by Azeris, that were never part of Nagorno-Karabakh. Hundreds of thousands of Azeris, and a smaller number of Armenians, were victims of ethnic cleansing by both sides.

A ceasefire came into effect in 1994, but the conflict has remained unresolved. Armenia remained in violation of a series of U.N. Security Council resolutions calling for its withdrawal from Azerbaijani territory. Efforts by the Minsk Group—formed by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe—to put forward a compromise agreement failed.

Collective trauma from the Armenian genocide that began in 1915—finally officially recognized by the U.S. Congress in 2019—has fueled a strong sense of nationalism among Armenians that has been used to rationalize their violations of international legal norms in the name of national survival.

Though Azerbaijan has more powerful armed forces, Russia's support for Armenia made Azerbaijan reluctant to attempt a military response. However, with oil money increasing Azerbaijan's military advantage, it launched an attack on Nagorno-Karabakh on Sept. 27, bolstered by Turkish

air support and Islamist mercenaries from Syria. Thousands of people have been killed.

Azerbaijan remains under the dictatorial rule of Ilham Aliyev, supported by the U.S., Turkey, and Israel. Aliyev has been accused of widespread human rights abuses, including torture, arbitrary arrests, and suppression of journalists.

The Armenians, by contrast, after years of corrupt and semi-autocratic rule, launched a successful nonviolent revolution in 2018 that ushered in democratic governance. Ironically, the new populist president, while democratically elected, took an even harder line toward the dispute. Also, Armenia's democratic transition led Putin to pull back Russia's traditional support, giving Azerbaijan an opening. Rather than push for more negotiations, the Azerbaijan government chose military action.

Meanwhile, the autocratic U.S.-backed Turkish regime has been promoting anti-Armenian rhetoric and ethnic chauvinism, prompting dismay from democratic Turks and from ethnic Armenians living in Turkey, descendants of genocide survivors.

The conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region is *not* caused by ancestral hatreds or a conflict between Islam and Christianity, but a legacy of colonialism, authoritarianism, and hypernationalism that has led to efforts by certain forces in the post-communist South Caucasus to establish exclusive control over historically multicultural areas.

Grassroots organizations on all sides have condemned the war. "We reject every nationalist and state-of-war narratives that exclude any possibility of us living together again on this soil," declared one group of Azerbaijani youth. A group of Armenian feminists place the responsibility for casualties on those who choose war, saying "We consciously choose peace." Americans and Israelis have called on their governments to stop arming Azerbaijan.

The ceasefire agreement negotiated in November ceded the majority of territory seized by Armenia in the 1990s back to Azerbaijan, including a large part of Nagorno-Karabakh, with Russian peacekeeping forces controlling most of what remains. Agreements effectively imposed by military force may halt the bloodshed for a time, but they are not effective means of conflict resolution. ✦

Stephen Zunes coordinates the Middle Eastern Studies program at the University of San Francisco.

COMMENTARY

BY PAOLA FUENTES GLEGHORN AND JEFF FUENTES GLEGHORN

T

ERA NOW!

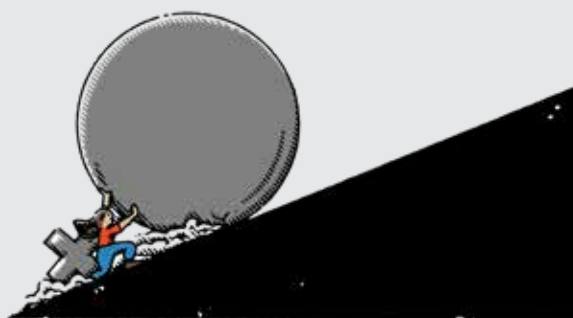
The United States is one of only 28 countries without a provision in its Constitution that provides equality under the law regardless of sex.

The Equal Rights Amendment was proposed in this country nearly a century ago. Congress passed the amendment in 1972 with bipartisan support in both houses and then set a time limit for ratification by the states. In January 2020, when Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the ERA, the amendment met the requirements to be added to the U.S. Constitution. Unfortunately, the deadline for ratification passed more than three decades ago.

The amendment's language is simple: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." The ERA would add what the Founding Fathers intentionally left out: constitutional rights and protections for everyone regardless of "sex." Isn't it time?

Without the ERA, women and LGBTQ people face threats to their personal and economic well-being, leaving them disproportionately without legal protection. Women and LGBTQ people face high risks of domestic violence, workplace harassment, and sexual assault. The U.S. ranks in the top 10 of the world's most dangerous countries for women, according to the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Though LGBTQ people make up 4.5 percent of the U.S. population, they are victims of 18.5 percent of hate crimes, according to FBI statistics. Passing the ERA would give Congress the power to pass legislation against gender-based violence and make it possible to hold states accountable for the protection of women and LGBTQ people against gender-based violence.

Among women who hold full-time, year-round jobs in the U.S., white women



earn 79 cents, Black women 63 cents, Indigenous women 60 cents, and Latina women 55 cents for each dollar paid to white men, according to a 2020 report. Additionally, the U.S. has no laws for paid family leave. Women are harmed economically by the absence of paid family leave because taking care of children falls overwhelmingly on women. The ERA would open the door for legislation to lessen the gender pay gap and provide equal protection for those who are pregnant. A constitutional amendment guaranteeing equality under the law could tackle systemic bias by allowing challenges to policies that discriminate against women and LGBTQ people without having to prove those policies were *designed* to discriminate.

As Christians, we believe that every person, regardless of sex, gender, race, ethnicity, ability, and sexual orientation, is made in the image of God. We know that God loves and creates us all equally. Equal treatment under the law flows from these truths. Any law that makes one group of people superior to another is a direct assault on these truths because it denies the full image of God in the group deemed inferior.

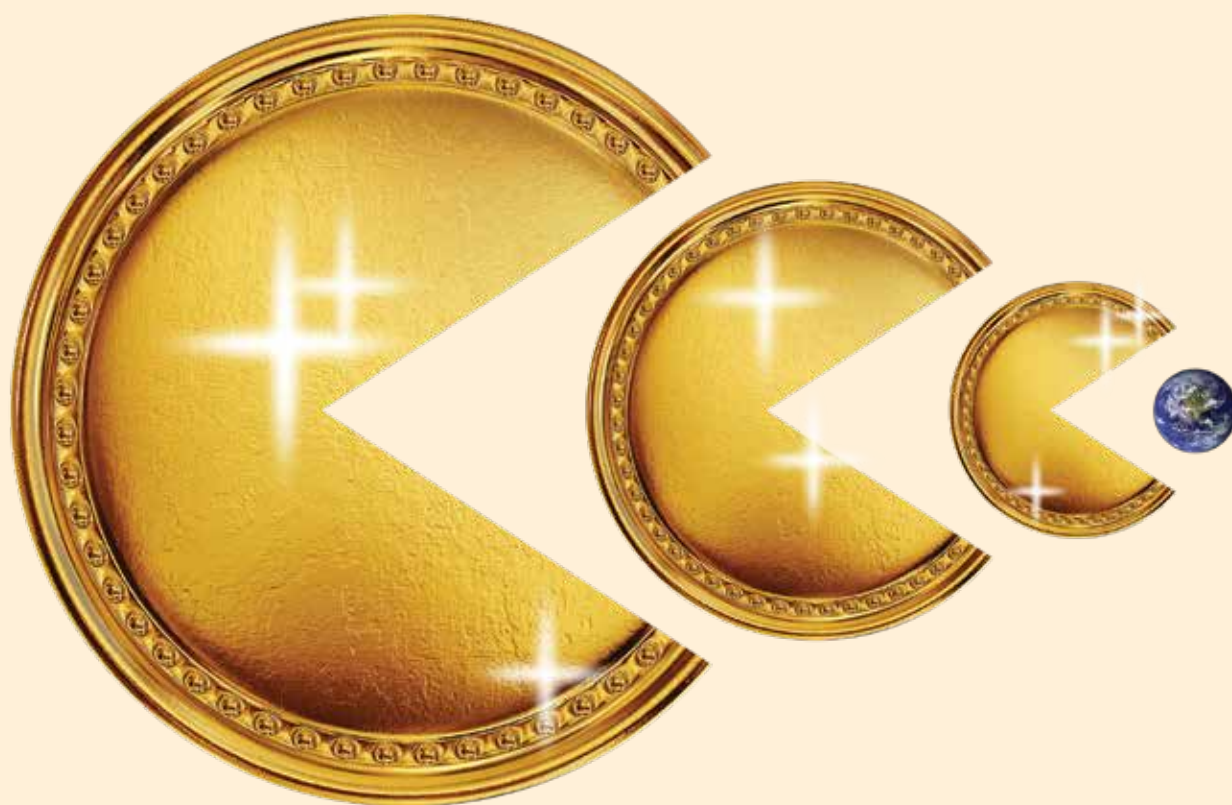
The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how interdependent we really are. We rely on each other's well-being and ability to thrive. As we look to the future and the country we want to have, now is the time to call on Congress to pass legislation allowing the ERA to be adopted immediately, removing the time limit on the ratification process. The threats faced by women and LGBTQ people create barriers to living the abundant life God wants for us all. An injury to one is an injury to all. ✪

**GOD LOVES AND
CREATES US ALL
EQUALLY. EQUAL
TREATMENT UNDER
THE LAW FLOWS FROM
THESE TRUTHS.**

Paola Fuentes Gleghorn leads the Sojourners campaigns on immigration and women and girls. Jeff Fuentes Gleghorn is a graduate of NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community.

TIME FOR SOME CLASS BETRAYAL

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When we say that “humans are heating up the planet,” we are technically correct, and yet misleading. Humans are indubitably driving climate change—but only some of us.

An Oxfam study released this fall showed that between 1990 and 2015—a period when we poured more carbon into the atmosphere than in all of history before that time—the richest 1 percent of humanity accounted for more of that damage than the entire bottom 50 percent of the species. In case you think that the top 1 percent is Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates, remind yourself that in fact it’s anyone whose income tops

**THE RICH DON'T JUST CONTROL
THE FLOW OF CARBON; THEY
CONTROL THE FLOW OF POWER.**

\$109,000 a year—that includes plenty of readers of this magazine. The richest 10 percent of humanity accounts for half of total emissions—that’s everyone whose income is above \$38,000. That’s quite likely you; it’s certainly me.

These people are scattered around the world, though the biggest concentrations are in the U.S., the EU, China, and the Middle East; India is appearing in the league tables too, a reminder that inequality is as much a problem within nations as between them. But what’s really sad, of course, is that anyone with a decent income is able to insulate themselves from most of the problems they’re causing. It’s people in poverty—whether in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans or along the delta of the Brahmaputra in Bangladesh—who get hit first and hardest.

One upshot of this research is that the richest people should strive to change their habits—fewer long-haul flights, in particular. But given the short window of time that we have, the real hope is that some of these same people will actually involve themselves in the battle to change the political and economic structures that keep us burning fossil fuel. Because, of course, the rich don’t just control the flow of carbon; they control the flow of power.

We need, as it were, some class betrayal.

Or, we need a renewed and powerful uprising of the people whose lives are most stunted and future most degraded.

Or, we need some strikingly successful attempt to build a sense of shared humanity, a real solidarity. Climate change, since ultimately it imperils us all, gives us perhaps the best shot at what the pope, in his most recent encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, called “the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity.” In a TED Talk a few days later, Francis put it more plainly: “In fact, the Earth must be taken care of, cultivated, and protected; we cannot continue to squeeze it like an orange. And we can say this, taking care of the Earth is a human right.”

He’s right. We have to do something—and the “we” is pretty clear. ❁

Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org and a *Sojourners* contributing editor, is the author most recently of *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?*

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SOJOURNERS

UNDER THE SUN

BY JEANIA REE V. MOORE

REST AND RESISTANCE



hubbub, the movement, the people. There is value in this reading of rest, particularly in how it spatially mediates self-care (thus, “retreats”). The thing about pandemics, however, lies in the *pan-* prefix denoting “all” or “every.” As safer-at-home policies and seemingly limitless racial violence make clear, whether facing COVID or white supremacy, withdrawal to elsewhere is not an option. So, what does rest mean when one cannot “retreat,” spatially or politically or otherwise?

After wrestling with what rest is and looks like for me over the past several months, I only have initial thoughts. Rather than understanding and practicing “rest” as something that takes me “away,” I am moving toward rest as a crucial form of relationship to the world, to others, and to myself.

As “no justice, no peace” conveys, true rest—peace—is not found in flight from social ills. There is a deeper integrity, one that not only links rest and activity but also frames rest itself *as active*. St. Augustine reflects on this integrity at the close of the *Confessions* in contemplating divine *ap-
atheia* as the coherence of God’s rest and work in the Sabbath. Tricia Hersey, founder of the Nap Ministry, frames this integrity within contemporary, liberation theological terms. Identifying sleep deprivation as a “racial and social justice issue” of white supremacy and capitalism, she affirms rest as a “form of resistance” and helps people resist through immersive workshops and installations.

The site of rest, the source of peace, and the offering of justice are one and the same. This identity, reflected in Jesus, tells us something about how we can and should live in this moment. If our struggles preclude or exclude rest—if they are cultivating fear, anxiety, and a dwindling sense of hope—then we need to find a different way. This does not mean rest is easy; on the contrary, like justice, it may be hard-won.

Rather than displacing the possibility of rest, the multiple pandemics underscore its centrality. Rest is not disconnected from social wellness and political power but vital to it. Rest is liberative—rest *is* resistance. ✦

Jeania Ree V. Moore is a writer, United Methodist deacon, and doctoral student in religious studies and African American studies at Yale University.

W

What is rest and what does rest look like during a time of pandemic?

Over the past year, the multiple pandemics we have faced have upended many things, not least of which has been our language.

“Essential” has been revealed to be simply another word for “disposable,” with “essential frontline workers” being those whose lives society deems expendable, not irreplaceable. “Safe” has been shown to be so shoddy, subjective, and circumscribed a reality in this country that protesting for Black lives in a pandemic is indeed safer than failing to protest at all. And “rest”—what *is* rest?

Many of us were struggling with healthy notions and practices of rest prior to COVID-19. Now? “Rest” seems both undefined and unattainable. Biblical images of rest have often been interpreted to emphasize separation, distance, and juxtaposition. For example, Jesus withdrawing from the crowds is often read as modeling rest distinct from the activity, the

HAPPY SOCIAL JUSTICE NEW YEAR FROM CHALICE PRESS

Something in the Water A 21st Century Civil Rights Odyssey

by Michael W. Waters
Foreword by Beto O'Rourke

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EYEWITNESS

4

**FOR YOUNG PEOPLE,
CLIMATE CHANGE
IS NOT AN
ABSTRACTION.**





THIS IS ABOUT OUR LIVES

"In 2017, Young Evangelicals for Climate Action marched in the People's Climate March. [The next day] we invited God's spirit to go with us into the halls of Congress. After we shared why climate change is important to us as young Christians, Sen. Mitch McConnell's staffer asked, 'How many of you identify as conservative or Republican?' Nobody raised their hand. The staffer smiled, like he suspected this was a Trojan horse kind of deal where we were bringing young progressives in here and pretending like we were evangelicals. One by one the young people told the staffer how they had grown up in conservative Christian households and that many of them still held those values. But because the party had left them behind on climate change, they could no longer claim the party.

Regardless of political party affiliation, younger generations are overwhelmingly supportive of climate action. I hope that message continues to reverberate across Capitol Hill. Every party should be engaged in this conversation. And if you're not, you're going to start losing—and lose for a while.

For young people, climate change is not an abstraction. This is about our lives, our futures, and the futures we want. Young people contributed next to nothing to the problem of climate change and yet are bearing the brunt of it. This fundamental injustice positions young people to make a moral argument that other generations can't.

Right now, with the wildfires out West and the hurricanes in the Gulf, climate change is on our front doorstep. In a weird way, those calamities give me hope because it's harder for us to look away. We're finally coming out of this stupor."

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap is the national organizer and spokesperson for Young Evangelicals for Climate Action. He spoke with Sojourners' Jenna Barnett.



FINDING OUR WAY IN POST-TRUMP AMERICA

Reflections on the task before us as the country,
and the church, prepare to repair and rebuild.





People all over the United States, and indeed the world, flooded city streets en masse when media outlets called the presidential election for Joe Biden on the fourth day after Election Day in November, four days of a nation holding its breath. In a year marked with repeated tragedy, a collective sigh of relief found form in marching bands and dance parties. Eight months into social isolation brought on by the coronavirus, many felt, if only for a moment, united. That was on a Saturday.

Then came Sunday. The prophetic word from pulpits across America: There can be no unity without justice. As of this writing, we know that more than 73 million Americans voted for Donald Trump—neighbors, family, members of our churches. We are a divided nation, a divided church. We reckon with this reality even as we look forward with hope to a new year and a different administration. As we begin to mend our social fabric and heal from the compounded traumas of 2020, *Sojourners* invited leaders from various sectors to offer their thoughts on the way forward.

—The Editors

Illustrations by Steffi Walthall

UNTIL JUSTICE ROLLS

by Jacqui Lewis

While much of the prophetic tradition indicts God's people for breaking covenant with their creator, Amos' prophetic eye is turned toward the folks who break covenant with their neighbors. Crushing the livelihood of the poor, doing nothing to alleviate their suffering, these would-be faithful people break the natural law—the *ubuntu* law—that humans are inextricably connected, our destinies bound together.

Amos indicts God's people for turning justice into wormwood and throwing righteousness to the ground. Rather than the noisy way they praise God in worship, Amos calls the people to "let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream." The words justice and righteousness constitute a "hendiadys," one idea in two words. When Amos pairs justice—*mishpat*—with righteousness—*tsedek*, the prophet means a just, righteous rule, ordered by God's intention for the world, by God's economy. In God's just and righteous reign on earth, there is healing, harmony, wholeness; there is truly freedom, liberty, and justice for all.

Though the presidential election is over, the work is not finished; good people of moral courage are called to inaugurate a society of justice and righteousness flowing for everyone. We'll be finished when no child is separated from her mother and when not one woman unknowingly has her womb separated from her body while incarcerated on the border or in a detention site of terror. We'll be finished when the millions of Americans who live in poverty are liberated from it. When the great disparity between white livelihood and Black lives and Black wellness is repaired because white supremacy takes its knee off the necks of Black folk; when children, women, and non-binary, brown, Indigenous, queer, Muslim, Sikh, and Jewish folk are all fully welcomed as precious in this land that claims to be one nation under God, we'll be finished.

Jacqui Lewis is senior minister at Middle Collegiate Church in New York.

**"Though the
presidential election is over,
the work is not finished."**

A WORK IN PROGRESS

by Margaret Atwood

We in Canada watched your election with nail-biting intensity, getting the cups of tea ready for an influx of refugees from south of the border. Thankfully, that won't be necessary just yet.

Now there's a breathing space. It's not a destination, it's a way station. Bottle of water, snack, pats on the back from encouraging bystanders, and then off you'll go again, long-distance runners.

This is a perilous journey, with many rocks and icebergs. For such a journey you need an Ice Captain: cool hand, knows the terrain, pays attention to what the science of radar says, keeps in mind the welfare of everyone on board. Looks like you just got an Ice Captain. That's good.

What else is needed? Sojourners work for "social justice," but "justice" has two opposites. One is injustice, and in fighting it a person could be tempted to employ an undesirable form of justice-revenge. But revenge begets revenge begets revenge. The other opposite of justice is mercy. Christians know that mercy is at the core of their good-news message: Forgiveness of enemies was very rare in religions before Christianity. It's also very hard to do.

What form could mercy take at the moment? Possibly it might require listening to what your "enemies" might actually have to say. Not everyone can be crammed into a box with just one label. Not everyone who disagrees with you is in bad faith. Some honestly think Plan A would benefit everyone, while others believe Plan B would be better. Listen carefully. If you do, perhaps others will be willing to listen to you.

America is a work in progress. So is democracy. Autocrats worldwide wish America ill: If democracy fails in America, there will no longer be a beacon of liberty and they themselves will feel justified as tyrants and pirate kings. "See? It doesn't work!"

All Americans should be aware that the vultures are gathering: Many in other countries are working for your shipwreck. We hope and believe you will prove them wrong.

Margaret Atwood, author of *Dearlly: New Poems* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, is an award-winning Canadian poet and novelist.

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

by Paul Ortiz

Election week marked the 100th anniversary of the Ocoee Election Day Massacre of 1920. In the wake of World War I, African Americans in 35 counties across Florida organized tens of thousands of new voters. Black Floridians vowed to put an end to white supremacy and to tear down the one-party state.

Ocoee is a town in western Orange County, Fla., and at that time many African Americans had earned a modicum of independence through farm and home ownership. The people of Ocoee sought to use the ballot to bring equality and justice to a state that boasted the highest per capita lynching rate in the nation.

In response, white supremacists launched a campaign of mayhem, assassinations, and voter suppression across the state, culminating

"We cannot let the
divide-and-conquer
strategy pit us against
each other."

in a two-day siege of Ocoee. White terrorists, including military veterans, law enforcement, and businessmen burned houses, destroyed churches, and killed an estimated 35 people. When it was over, Black voting in this part of the state was crushed for generations, Ocoee became an all-white town for six decades, and affluent whites in central Florida took over African American farms.

A century later, we remember the Election Day martyrs in Florida by fighting for justice harder than ever. Even as we celebrate the defeat of Donald Trump, we should remember that the powers behind the Trump movement will be with us for the rest of our lives. The American ruling class has demonstrated that it will be pursuing an apartheid-like strategy to preserve elite, white rule. These tactics include voter suppression, economic inequality, and use of the divide-and-conquer strategy in an effort to use fear to pit us against each other. We cannot let this happen.

In Florida, community and labor organizers have combined "street heat" movements such as "Fight for \$15" with union organizing, defense of immigrant rights, and municipal politics to combat the reactionary state legislature. Local organizations have successfully passed anti-wage theft measures, higher minimum wages, and renters' rights ordinances. While we did not carry the state for Biden, we carried Amendment 2—which set Florida's minimum wage at \$15—by 60 percent!

We are keeping the memory of the struggles and sacrifices of Ocoee Election Day martyrs by attempting to bring to fruition the aspirations for democracy they expressed so heroically a century ago.

Paul Ortiz is director of the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program at the University of Florida and the author of *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920* (University of California Press).

MORAL AUTHORITY IN A PANDEMIC

by Leana Wen, as told
to *Sojourners*

President Donald Trump's strategy around the pandemic has been one of surrender, of capitulation. His chief of staff, Mark Meadows, even said we can't control the pandemic, moving on to talk about the vaccine and therapeutics that they were holding out hope for. That, to me, summarized the Trump administration's approach: We are going to let the virus rip through communities, and we are going to cross our fingers and hope there will be a vaccine that will save the day.

The single biggest challenge facing President-elect Joe Biden is how to win the hearts and minds of the American people. He can pass, and even implement, great policies, but unless he can get the American people to follow his moral authority, he will not be successful. You can have a federal mask mandate, but if half of the country refuses to abide by it, it's not going to do much good.

On day one, Biden should start having briefings with the American people by his top public health experts. I hope also that he will have a 21st century version of the fireside chats, where he will level with the American people and talk about the actions that we can all be taking, that we have a common enemy here, that it takes all of us working together in unity to defeat this virus and reclaim our economy. The American people are looking for that kind of moral leadership. And he should not wait until Jan. 20. It will be too late by then for hundreds of thousands of people.

Leana Wen is an emergency physician and public health professor at George Washington University. She previously served as Baltimore's Health Commissioner.

"You can have a
federal mask mandate, but
if half of the country refuses
to abide by it, it's not going
to do much good."

AN UNAPOLOGETIC PATH FORWARD

by Megan Rohrer

"**Out of the bars** and into the streets," Harvey Milk shouted through a bullhorn in San Francisco's Castro District. Milk prophetically forecast the way coming out and educating friends, family, and neighbors would change hearts, minds, and voting habits. While this strategy undoubtedly progressed LGBTQ rights, it came at a steep emotional cost for all who engaged in these sacred and secular debates.

The gift of the Trump administration is that anti-trans actions were so blatant that we no longer need to prove the harmful effects of discrimination against trans and gender-queer individuals. Once inaugurated, the Biden-Harris administration could swiftly reverse the executive actions that rolled back trans rights in schools, shelters, health care, and the military.

When change comes, trans individuals and our allies should resist debates about our dignity, sacredness, or our private parts. Instead, we must boldly proclaim trans theology without apology. We must lift up the stories of the trans saints of the early church and the many sacred names for trans individuals that existed prior to colonization.

Unapologetically proclaiming trans sacredness is the antidote for the deadly rhetoric trans folk have endured for decades. On Trans Day of Remembrance, Nov. 20, we remembered those (47 in the U.S. and 386 worldwide whose names we know) that were killed in anti-trans violence over the previous year. The greatest political action trans and gender-queer individuals can take is to live boldly, wherever they are.

Megan Rohrer is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in San Francisco and the community chaplain coordinator for the San Francisco Police Department. They were the first openly transgender pastor ordained by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

MARCHING TO A CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE

by Ben Lowe

Over the past four years, the Trump administration has worked aggressively to undo environmental protections—including withdrawing the U.S. from the Paris Agreement, rolling back the Clean Power Plan, and reversing more than 100 environmental rules, ignoring and exacerbating our worsening climate crisis. At the same time, growing majorities of people across the U.S. and in the church are waking up to the reality of climate crisis—and innovations such as clean energy and high-efficiency technologies are becoming increasingly viable alongside natural climate solutions such as habitat protection and restoration.

Under the Biden administration, we can build on what's already working and scale things up at the national and international levels. In addition to rejoining Paris, a major step forward would be to finally pass legislation that puts an honest price on carbon. This would make clear the true costs of pollution and incentivize carbon sequestration and other market-based responses.

The church has a role to play. We need to lament the widespread desecration of God's creation, repent for our complicity and self-cen-

tered idolatries, and work to reform our communities, in part by learning from Indigenous peoples on the front lines of environmental injustice and climate action. Climate change intersects with racial injustice, forced displacement, public health crises, and much more; we must address these together, in solidarity with our sisters and brothers around the world.

As the transition to a clean energy future continues marching forward, we can contribute the prophetic vision and moral will to help society speed up this urgent transition while making it more just and equitable. This includes joining with groups such as Young Evangelicals for Climate Action and A Rocha and advocating for socio-ecological adaptation and resilience. As Christians, we have a remarkable opportunity in these unprecedented times to show God's love and hope for all people and places.

Ben Lowe, chair of A Rocha USA and co-chair of Christians for Social Action, is a doctoral candidate and NSF Fellow at the University of Florida.

IT'S TIME FOR THE MEDIA TO BE BIASED

by Wajahat Ali

For our fragile and flawed nation to survive, the fourth estate must decisively come down in favor of democracy and facts. Our institutions were tested, bent, corrupted, and frayed during the past four years. Disinformation, foreign interference, and conspiracy theories that existed on the fringe now pass for mainstream Republican talking points.

The same institution that is supposed to hold power accountable, be adversarial if necessary in the pursuit of facts, and inform the citizenry was often a willing enabler and participant in the ongoing Trump reality TV show. He was lavished with nearly \$5 billion of free media advertising during his 2016 campaign. Former CBS CEO Les Moonves admitted that Trump's candidacy "may not be good for America, but it's damn good for CBS." CNN head Jeff Zucker gave candidate Trump debate advice, mulled TV projects with him, and referred to him as "the boss."



**"When the media becomes
complicit with power, it
becomes its blunt instrument."**

NBC invited him to host *Saturday Night Live*. This was all done after he proposed a Muslim ban, called Mexicans "rapists" and "criminals," and promoted the racist birther conspiracy.

It was a Faustian bargain. Their initial reward for complicity was excellent ratings. It ended with Trump and his base using the language of fascists to refer to the media as "the enemy of the people" and "fake news" simply for reporting facts critical of "the Chosen One."

When the media becomes complicit with power, it becomes its blunt instrument. For too long, we have entertained a "both sides" false equivalency in entertaining President Trump and the Republican Party's bad faith in promoting disinformation and manufactured grievances.

Enough. Too much is at stake.

Access, ratings, book deals, and proximity to power come at a massive cost. The price could be our fragile democracy and the integrity of the fourth estate, which actively needs to establish itself as a check on power. One way to do this is to refuse to book guests who spew lies, actively challenge falsehoods from the White House and elsewhere, de-platform hatemongers, demand social media giants and cable news do better to limit disinformation, and stop treating the fourth estate as a Sunday sporting event.

We still have a chance to get this right, but only if we demand better and work toward it.

Wajahat Ali is a journalist, lawyer, award-winning playwright, TV host, and contributing opinion writer for *The New York Times*.



A PROUD HUMANITARIAN TRADITION

by Jenny Yang

We're facing an ever-escalating refugee crisis: Nearly 80 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes, 40 percent of them children. This is the highest number recorded since World War II. Since the start of the refugee resettlement program in 1980, the United States has resettled more than 3 million refugees, with an average ceiling of 95,000 people per year. But for this fiscal year, the outgoing president set the number at 15,000 people, the lowest in U.S. history.

There will be a critical need in the beginning of President-elect Joe Biden's term to ensure that we do more—and people of faith have an important role to play. First, we need to tell our members of Congress to urge the new president to immediately change this year's refugee ceiling to 125,000 people, honoring the pledge he made during his campaign and repeated after his election in November. Second, church communities need to make our neighborhoods welcoming for these new residents. Agencies like World Relief need volunteers all the time to help pick up refugees at the airport, donate furniture and clothing, and just be a friend to our new neighbors. And third, we need to pray in earnest for the millions of people around the world who are forcibly displaced due to violence, persecution, and human rights violations—and educate ourselves on our scriptural responsibility to these neighbors.

The U.S. refugee resettlement program is a crown jewel of U.S. humanitarianism. We must do everything we can to build back this proud humanitarian tradition.

Jenny Yang is the senior vice president of advocacy and policy at World Relief.

WHERE REVOLUTIONS HAPPEN

by Valarie Kaur

We are tired and traumatized after four years of assaults. We are hungry for renewal. Sound government is necessary but not sufficient to heal and transition America. Only we the people can bring our communities together, tend to our wounds, and do the labor of reckoning, reimagining, and remaking our nation, block by block, heart to heart.

On Jan. 21, 2021, the day after the president's inauguration, let us hold a people's inauguration. Let us renew our spirits and recommit to our core values as a nation. Let us make a promise to one another and to ourselves to build an America as a nation with liberty and justice for all. Let us vow to do our part. Let us take an oath modeled after the president's oath and make it our own: "I do solemnly vow that I will faithfully execute my role in healing and transitioning America, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend truth, dignity, justice, and joy for myself and for those around me, and that I will do so with love."

Let the people's inauguration anchor us in love. Love calls us to be brave with our grief and follow the lead of Black, brown, and Indigenous communities to birth an anti-racist nation. Love calls us to harness our rage, for the aim of divine rage is not vengeance but to reorder the world. Love calls us to insist on the humanity of our opponents, for that is how we hold up a vision of a future that leaves no one behind. And love returns us to joy.

Revolutions don't only happen in big grand public moments, but in the spaces where a critical mass of people are coming together to inhabit a new way of being. We will be remembered as the ones who took America, and humanity, across the threshold—if we show up to the labor. It begins with our inauguration.

Valarie Kaur is a Sikh activist, author, and founder of the Revolutionary Love Project.



MAY WE MAKE AMERICA

by Otis Moss III

In the place where anxiety attempts to dance, may we begin again. Let us begin to cook meals for strangers flavored by compassion. Stir the gumbo of grace given to us by the spirit of God. Be faithful enough to drink from the cup of courage and set the table of democracy guided by the spirit of love walking humbly with acts of justice.

Forgive us for words spoken that demean, marginalize, and undermine creation and the creation of community. Forgive us for allowing the shadow of caste and class to cloud our imagination of what is possible. Forgive us for not speaking truth to power nor speaking truth rooted in love to guide our decisions.

We seek to be a nation where different does not mean deficient, color does not mean caste, and gender is not, and shall not be, restricted by glass ceilings. We seek to be a nation where children are able to laugh and will not hunger in the night and where elders are cared for and celebrated.

May we make America—America as a quilt to warm the bodies of the homeless and the timid. May we make America, where those who kneel and those who stand find a seat at the table of democracy. May we make America, where liberty covers the Muslim and the Methodist, the Baptist and the Buddhist, the Hindu and the Holiness, the Jewish and the gentile, the atheist and the Asian, the Indigenous and the immigrant, the Presbyterian and the Pentecostal, the Latino and the Lutheran, the queer and the Quaker, the urban and the suburban, the rural and the

“May the power of holy mischief urge us to step out of the darkness into the marvelous light.”

Reformed, the southern and the Sikh, the wealthy and the impoverished.

May the power of holy mischief urge us to step out of the darkness into the marvelous light. May the soul of this nation be held by the sacred love flowing from the amazing grace of the God who whispers in our hearts that we are called to be better, do better, and live better. May we make America. May we make an America that is yet to be a *United States of America*.

This is our prayer, on this day, in this year, in this century: May we make America. Amen. ✕

Otis Moss III is senior pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago.

DOING OUR OWN WORK

As people of faith, how do we heal family histories entangled with colonization?

By Elaine Enns



To remain close to their children, Indigenous parents camped outside Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School, Saskatchewan, because they were forbidden by law to remove them from the school. (Canada Department of Indian Affairs report, 1895)



Students and staff at Presbyterian-run Regina Indian Industrial School in Saskatchewan, 1908. (University of Regina photo)



Mennonite church choir in Osterwick, Ukraine, 1923, including both of the author's maternal grandparents. Between 1923 and 1929, some 22,000 Mennonite refugees fled the Russian Revolution and its aftermath. (Enns family photo)



The author's maternal grandparents built Schulz Fabric (shown) in Osterwick, Ukraine. In 1919, Ukrainian revolutionaries commandeered the factory and held the women captive for two weeks. Several members of the author's family were killed under the the Soviet regime. (Enns family photo)

A

A few years ago, Ched Myers and I discovered this graffiti in my old suburban neighborhood in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, scrawled across a fence just a block from where I grew up:

“... as long as the sun shines,
as long as the waters flow downhill,
and as long as the grass grows green ...”

It is a venerable phrase from the Two Row Wampum of 1613, an agreement between the Five Nations of the Iroquois and representatives of the Dutch government in what is now upstate New York, which affirmed principles of Indigenous self-determination, rights, and jurisdiction. The phrase has been reiterated in most subsequent treaties between European settlers and Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Sixty miles due north of my old neighborhood is Opwashemoe Chakatinaw (named Stoney Knoll by settlers), nestled between the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers. A spiritual center for the Young Chippewayans, it was part of Reserve 107, assigned to this Cree tribe in 1876 under Treaty 6.

A decade later, Métis, Cree, and Assiniboine communities joined as allies in the Northwest Resistance of 1885 to protest the Canadian government's lack of good faith in upholding treaties and continuing settler encroachment throughout the region. Centered in nearby Batoche, the uprising was led by Louis Riel, a religiously inspired Métis political leader who sought to preserve the rights, land, culture, and survival of his people. The insurrection was squashed by the Canadian military, and Riel and several Indigenous leaders publicly hung.

Less than a decade after *that*, the first Mennonites began to arrive in Saskatchewan. These settlers built their first church in 1896 at Eigenheim, just 14 miles from Opwashemoe Chakatinaw; its founding pastor was Peter Regier, my brother-in-law's great-grandfather. The following year, the Young Chippewayans had their reserve taken away by the Canadian government

without compensation or consultation and opened to the new Mennonite (and Lutheran) settlers.

A generation later, between 1923 and 1929, some 22,000 Mennonite refugees from the Russian Revolution came to the prairies, the largest influx of Mennonite immigrants in Canadian history. These *Russländer*—which included all four of my grandparents—were fleeing horrific violence, leaving behind many family members who did not survive the Soviet regime. Though grateful to have escaped, these refugees carried significant trauma—and were entirely unaware of the violent Indigenous displacement a few decades prior that had made “available” the lands some of them occupied. Many Mennonites, including some of my relatives, still live in the Stoney Knoll area.

It is a place where two traumatized peoples lived side by side, though mostly segregated from and ignorant of the other. Mennonites, with their long history of religious dissidence and persecution, fled another round of violence in Europe, settled on Cree land, and set about building prosperous farms. Cree communities, on the other hand, resident here for thousands of years, struggled to survive waves of settlers, as well as continuing subjugation, discrimination, and racist injustices from Canadian colonial society. Today, Young Chippewayan leaders are *still* organizing for federal recognition and repatriation.

Cree elders use the term *kihci-aso-tamâtowin* to describe sacred promises made to one another in treaty. The little

hill of Opwashemoe Chakatinaw is one of countless places around North America where the settler state broke its promises. It is a haunting microcosm of the wider settler colonial story—a past and continuing struggle over history, identity, and justice—that has left no corner of Turtle Island untouched.

CULTURAL GENOCIDE

A discipleship of decolonization tackles the oldest and deepest injustices on this continent. These violations inhabit every intersection of settler and Indigenous worlds and have generated wounds that are inextricably woven into the fabric of our own personal and political lives. We believe the work of decolonization is about healing those wounds and confronting the “ghosts” (such as the graffiti mentioned above) that haunt the places, peoples, and traditions that have shaped us all.

Take, for example, the following braid of my personal narrative.

1) An estimated 20,000 Indigenous children were removed from their families during the “Sixties Scoop” (which actually ran from the late 1950s into the 1980s) in Canada, during which they were placed in foster homes or adopted, primarily by white middle-class families. This included many Mennonites, including some of my relatives.

I grew up with two Indigenous cousins, unaware of the significant dark side to the Adopt Indian Métis program. My aunt and uncle were never told what band



Young Chippewayan Chief George Kingfisher and Mennonite Ray Funk raise the Treaty 6 flag at the annual Spruce River Folk Festival in Saskatchewan. (MCC Canada photo)

their Indigenous children were from, nor given any cultural competence, education, or training. I remained oblivious to what my cousins were experiencing; one died young and the other has distanced himself. In January 2019, Premier Scott Moe apologized for Saskatchewan's role in the Sixties Scoop, long after studies had shown that the actions of the child welfare system during this period represented "cultural genocide." Yet such matters were never discussed in our family until very recently.

2) As a child, I knew something horrible had happened to my grandparents during the Russian Revolution. At age 13, I interviewed my Grandma Margreta Schulz, recording her on a cassette tape. She spoke at length of the beauty and abundance her family had enjoyed during her childhood years in Ukraine. But as her account approached her teenage years, she began to weep and could not continue.

It was only later that I learned that Grandma Schulz, then 14, survived a two-week home invasion. This episode was part of a continuous climate of violence, plundering, rape, and killing endured by Mennonites and other German-speakers during the Russian Civil War from 1917 to 1921. Over Christmas 1918, her home was commandeered by Ukrainian revolutionary forces under the command of Nestor Makhno. The Mennonite men had fled into the forest, while my grandma, her older sister, and girl cousins were hidden in the attic. Margreta's mother, Anna, tried to respond to the violence with courage and compassion, bandaging the wounds and feeding the rough peasant soldiers. Anna's response may have warded off the worst; later her sister and three other relatives were brutally murdered in their home.

I experienced my grandmother as a joyful person, full of laughter; seeing her cry during my interview left an indelible impression, planting in me seeds of both curiosity and trepidation. I eventually came to learn how many of her generation suffered from PTSD, how the silence around their experiences negatively impacted our community, and how unresolved trauma inhibited our ability to connect with our even more profoundly traumatized Indigenous neighbors.

3) In my final year of college, I volunteered with the Big Sisters/Little Sisters program in Manitoba. I was paired with a 13-year-old Cree girl who had just been released from juvenile detention. She was living in a group home, pregnant for the

second time, with twins. Her "crimes" had been sniffing glue, stealing food and clothes, and getting into fights—behaviors I now understand as reactions to a racist system that did not meet her basic human needs.

Despite my lack of race or economic analysis at the time, she helped me see that the criminal justice system was unable to address the injustices she faced. She described to me the pain of being forced to give up her first child and of not knowing where he was, and vowed her twins would be raised "by an Indian family." This encounter raised a new set of questions for me about how her ancestors had been displaced by mine.

Such experiences growing up were my first tutorials in the hard truths of colonization and planted seeds of disillusionment

THE WORK OF DECOLONIZATION IS ABOUT HEALING WOUNDS AND CONFRONTING GHOSTS.

in my otherwise insular suburban white existence. It was almost impossible to metabolize these glimpses of the violent legacy of settler colonialism in the absence of any real engagement or explanatory framing. So I repressed these memories; they festered below my consciousness, awaiting an awakening that has unfolded over my three decades in the restorative justice field. This has brought me to the work of *Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization*.

FACING OUR HISTORY WITH COURAGE

The great writer-activist Audre Lorde challenged white folks to "do our own work." We who are settler and white must heal from internalized and externalized patterns of both racism and settler colonialism. Though there are vast differences in the experiences of European immigrant descendants, we are each and all shaped by socialization into myths of superiority and assimilation into a race/class regime that

privileges some and marginalizes others.

Canadian decolonization theorists diagnose a settler "epistemology of ignorance" and "luxury of forgetting." "Abolition by amnesia" makes us afraid of our own history. The term "agnosia" refers to a refusal to know or care about the violations of colonization past and present. We believe that *our* decolonization work must sort through the damage: our ancestral trauma; historical silences; narratives of innocence; entanglement in policies that dispossessed Indigenous land, life, and culture; and moral injury. Only such work will enable and empower us to recognize and redress past (and continuing) injustices.

We invite other settlers to engage our "Landlines" (revisiting where and how our ancestors settled and how we reside on the land today), "Bloodlines" (reversing the agnosia perpetuated in our familial and communal narratives), and "Songlines" (traditions that empower us to make things right by embracing restorative solidarity and working to redistribute wealth, land, and power).

This journey requires a determined dance between critically demythologizing our own narratives while genuinely encountering those of Indigenous and other historically oppressed communities. If we focus *only* on our family stories, in the way hobby genealogists do, for example, this will only be another instance of centering whiteness. But neither can we attach ourselves to other people's stories—as some white solidarity activists do—in ways that would either *dissociate* from our own responsibilities or *appropriate* the cultural strength of others.

For settler Christians, a discipleship of decolonization is both demanding and liberating: facing ghosts past and present, healing the disease within and around us, and struggling for justice and building relationships with Indigenous communities in the places impacted by our people's settlement. This is how we honor covenants for "as long as the sun shines."

To do this work is to embrace the hope articulated by poet Maya Angelou that "history, despite its wrenching pain / cannot be unlived, but if faced / with courage, need not be lived again." ✨

Elaine Enns is co-director of Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries in Oak View, Calif. This article is adapted with permission from her and Ched Myers' new book, *Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, wipfandstock.com, 2020).



‘YOU ARE ME

Indigenous communities honor relationships with all life.
Will European descendants learn to do the same?



AND I AM YOU'

By Néstor Medina / Illustration by Soma

I grew up in Guatemala, a country where the Indigenous people make up more than 50 percent of the population. I was told growing up that my ancestors were Europeans (Spaniards and Italians). Even though I was identified as *ladino* (not Indigenous) by Guatemalan official nomenclature, I was attracted to Mayan languages and communities (K'iche', Kaqchikel, and Q'eqchi', among others).

I felt a resonance with their orientation toward the earth, their deep sense of communal cohesion, and their mystical world of ancestral spirits. After doing some genealogical work, I learned that one of my grandfathers was Mayan.

I began to notice practices and attitudes in my family that I was certain were of Indigenous origins: my dad's idiosyncratic disregard for manufactured material goods in favor of plants; my uncle's pouring of alcohol on the floor before serving a drink; my mom's smoking of cigars as an invitation to the spirits and San Simón to be with us in our gatherings. All have an Indigenous provenance.

As I learned more, I recognized those familial practices as part of a millennia-old cosmovision and mindset, a way of viewing the cosmic order of a civilization through which Indigenous peoples organize everyday activities, even today. Each is a theo-ethical gesture for safeguarding their relationship with life itself, in all life's diversity.

My travels around other Latin American nations have allowed me to interact with other Indigenous peoples and learn from their traditions and wisdom. As a scholar, I have also encountered similar patterns of life among First Nations in Canada and Native Americans in the United States.

Through the large expanse of the Americas, these ethnic groups and communities share common views of the origins of the world. They share an understanding of the earth as teeming with life; all of them operate within a mystical-spiritual relationship that weaves together the earth, the spirits of their ancestors, celestial bodies, other forms of life, and humans.

In these cosmovisions, humans are not the most important agents, but are also not neutral bystanders. For example, Berta Cáceres' activism for the protection of Honduran ecosystems against transnational mining corporations was not only the work of an "environmentalist." Her work was deeply rooted in an Indigenous cosmovision that gives priority to protect-

ing the sustaining life force of the earth and understands humans as key agents in that effort.

BUEN VIVIR

These approaches to life remind me of what Indigenous peoples in South America have dubbed *buen vivir* (literally, good living). Buen vivir emphasizes a holistic approach to life that requires rethinking the social structures and dynamics that shape people in community and how those structures directly impact the environment. Buen vivir refers to a qualitative measure of the relationships between people, others in their community, and their surrounding environment. It envisions a different way to build society.

Those communities that subscribe to buen vivir are built on the principle of profound interrelationship—individuals are linked to a larger diverse communal whole, which includes nature and the spirits of the ancestors and animals. Ideas like "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," for example, are understood in a collective sense, not in terms of individual rights and privileges. Individualist focus disrupts the communal equilibrium based on coexistence and the survival of the community. The consumption of natural resources and concepts such as "absolute" ownership of property are measured in relation to the survival of the members of the community and how those concepts protect existing natural resources for generations to come.

At its heart, buen vivir presupposes the collective ethical imperative to protect life in all its forms. Unlimited extraction and exploitation of natural resources, individual accumulation of wealth, and forced cultural assimilation are fundamentally antithetical to buen vivir. What these communities seek to build are "plurivocal" societies where many voices



are heard, and the central axis of existence is not humanity but the larger structures and forces that sustain life on the planet. In *buen vivir*, the values of interrelationship and interdependence, the survival of each other, and the preservation of natural ecosystems are all preconditions for the survival of the community.

Buen vivir provides a framework for understanding life, people, community, and the divine from the vantage point of mutual coexistence. In the mythical cosmovisions of Indigenous peoples, humans are understood to be part of the larger vortex of life that connects all living things. Respect for life in its richly diverse expressions requires unique interactions with each living thing. Diverse peoples are celebrated as heirs to diverse forms of knowledges and life experiences. They are not catalogued according to prejudiced ethnoracial differences. Nature is not seen as a material repository of potential products for consumption. Instead, the earth is properly appreciated as the “mother,” the life source that sustains all. If something happens to nature, the entire structure of life falls out of balance and the future of life itself is at risk.

ACROSS THE CONTINENT

Buen vivir is not unique to the Indigenous communities of South America. I’ve also encountered it among the Zapatistas, as they continue to reclaim self-government in Chiapas, Mexico. Two main features of the Zapatista social structure are an affirmation of the bonds of mutuality and a refusal to adopt punitive approaches to policing and fighting crime. To safeguard the community, they’ve chosen a model of “transformative justice,” an approach that focuses on the restorative nature of justice, not punishment. In Guatemala, the Mayan phrase “*Utz’ K’aslimaal*” (good life or a life in balance) is another example. The concept conveys a similar proposal as *buen vivir*.

Cognate terms from other ethnic groups in Latin America describe similar realities. Orlando Fals Borda and Arturo Escobar remind us that among Afro-Colombians from the North Cauca river communities, the governing idea is *sentipensar* (literally translated as to think-feel). *Sentipensar* focuses on communities’ attitudes in carrying out their daily activities—as they consider the effect of each choice and action on the water and the fish in the river from which they draw their sustenance and on the land that feeds them.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES SAFEGUARD THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH LIFE IN ALL ITS DIVERSITY.

The first *Encuentro del Buen Vivir* held in Mexico in 2012 and the seventh *Encuentro Internacional por el Buen Vivir* held in Peru in 2020 are examples of the wide range of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities that resonate with the principles of *buen vivir* across the continent.

Some refer to *buen vivir* as if it were a recent development. But women’s rights activist and Guatemalan Indigenous leader Aura Lolita Chávez Ixcaquic reminds us that these cosmovisions are part of the long-standing legacy of generations of Indigenous ancestors who have lived this way. The crucial teaching of *buen vivir* is that the Indigenous communities of the Americas are offering us a *proyecto de vida*—a “life project”—that runs on a different path from the pervasive structures of capitalism, commodification of life, and extraction of natural resources.

Buen vivir is informed by a logic that views the multifaceted and multiform expressions of life as sacred, therefore it resists reducing life to the lowest common denominator of capital. The value of human labor is in its responsibility to actively strive to preserve the fragile balance between humans, other forms of life, the earth, and the ancestral spirits—not in amassing wealth or producing material goods.

A PROJECT OF DEATH

Among Latin Americans, when an individual has great financial resources, they are said to *vivir bien* (to live well). But such a mode of living focuses on ideas of individual abundance and affluence with little consideration of the impact such wealth has on the environment and the community. The Indigenous concept of *buen vivir* highlights the importance of consuming only what one needs. The goal is not unfettered economic growth but sustenance for all. In other words, it goes beyond the horizon of normative economics through capital. The more I think about these dynamics, the more I am convinced that *buen vivir* stands on a different path than the pervasive structures of the Doctrine of Discovery—and the colonization and capitalism that accompany it.

The Doctrine of Discovery—a series of edicts that established a theological, political, and legal justification for European colonization and seizure of lands that were not inhabited by Christians—developed over time. By the middle of the 15th century, such edicts had become a legal mechanism that the Portuguese, who sought to invade the Canary Islands and North Africa around 1436, used to justify enslaving Africans. The Portuguese colonizers received “full and free permission” from Pope Nicholas V through the papal bull *Dum Diversas* (1452) to “invade, cap-

WILL DISMANTLING COLONIALISM OPEN THE POSSIBILITY FOR EUROPEAN DESCENDANTS TO ALSO CHOOSE LIFE?

ture, and subjugate” the non-Christian inhabitants. Shaped by notions of European ethnoracial, civilizational, cultural, and religious superiority, the doctrine became the catalyst for the Western European military, genocidal, and colonizing project, through which Western Europeans (and eventually Americans) invaded and took possession of Indigenous lands around the world.

From a Western European perspective, the logic seemed flawless.

But from the perspective of what theologian Enrique Dussel calls “the underside of modernity,” the Doctrine of Discovery paved the way for globalized market capitalism in its multiple expressions. Ideas of the commodification of bodies and of life itself—as well as the adoption of a racialized social evolutionary construction of societies—all stem from that doctrine.

The “imperial gaze,” which saw the earth as the repository of quantifiable wealth (in capitalist terms) and was pervasive in European conquests, has contributed to rapacious attitudes today that view natural resources as freely available to provide and serve the needs of humans. The extraction of natural resources—such as minerals, oil, and precious stones—is the extreme manifestation of the doctrine’s logic of the commodification of nature and epitomizes the radical qualitative separation between humanity and the rest of creation. This worldview runs counter to everything for which *buen vivir* stands. Capitalism enshrines the doctrine’s attitudes of despoliation of nature behind a facade of progress, advancement, and modernity.

A PROJECT OF LIFE

In 1615, Quechua Peruvian Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala wrote *El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno* (*The First New Chronicle and Good Government*), which he sent as a handwritten manuscript to King Philip III of Spain. After 30 years of research across South America, Guaman Poma concluded that the Incan empire and society were all-around *better* than the colonial rule imposed by the Spaniards, who had arrived in the Incan region in the 1530s. He bolstered his conclusions by identifying the ways Indigenous peoples were maltreated, and he detailed the hypocrisy of Europeans who did not live up to the standards of their own proclaimed religion—one that valued love of neighbor, peace, hospitality, and deep reverence for their creator God.

I would posit that not much has changed since then. Indigenous or-

igin stories and cosmovisions continue to articulate their peoples’ relationship with the existing world in similar ways—and continue to believe those understandings to be “better.” Be they Guaraní, Quechua, Aymara, or Maya, among others, their understanding of the world and society are diametrically different from those the Europeans brought to the Americas.

Through the notion of *buen vivir*, these Indigenous communities challenge all of us to reconsider our attitudes toward each other, ancestral spirits, other peoples, and the world. They offer a radically alternative “life project” that stands against oppressive European-rooted systems steeped in the heritage of colonialism and capitalism (including racialized discrimination, hyper individualism, and unfettered contamination of the environment).

It could be said that the Doctrine of Discovery is actually part of a “death project” that perpetuates the radical disconnect between human groups and between humans and other living things and the earth. This death project requires military activity, violence against the environment, and the exploitation of other human groups to subsidize the extravagance of the few. Many refer to this “end of the world” time as the Anthropocene—a geologic era not only of human modification of the natural world, but one in which humans have the power to eradicate human life altogether.

In contrast, *buen vivir* emphasizes the radical interconnectedness and interdependence between all living things, as well as between human groups. The end game is to work together and coexist to ensure the survival of the human community today and for seven generations to come. Attention to the logic of *buen vivir* enables the diagnosis of root causes for the impending doom, of which global warming is only a symptom.

As Lolita Chávez teaches, “We draw strength from many principles, including reciprocity (‘you are me and I am you’). That gives us strength as women and this connection with life and the network that we all form. ... So, as part of that mesh, we declare that we must have territories free of companies and free of violence against women, and that empowers us so that we can say that we are moving toward the full meaning of life.” That’s *buen vivir*. ❖

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POET NIKKY FINNEY SEEKS THE FLOURISHING OF BLACK FAMILIES IN A TIME OF VIOLENT DECAY.



Poetry

For Black people in the U.S.—a collective from which lives are still stolen on a daily basis, as though the slave-boat travels of 1619 never ended but merely set course in new directions to the same destination—reclamation is essential. Perhaps our history motivated the poet Nikky Finney's father to repurpose a phrase that long had a negative connotation into a moniker to give his daughter positive focus.

"My mother steeped us in the stories of Black history and my father named me 'Love Child' in order not to give anyone else the opportunity to distract me from what I had come to earth to be," writes Finney, winner of the 2011 National Book Award for Poetry, in her newest collection,

Love Child's Hotbed of Occasional Poetry. "So be she."

And so she is. About a month into quarantine 2020, Finney released perhaps the most history-and-affection-freighted book to be published this harrowing year. *Love Child's Hotbed* cannot be read on a Kindle. Less a typical, slender publication of modern verse, and more a hefty coffee-table book of startling import, it brings to mind *The Black Book*, that historical anthology co-edited in 1974 by Toni Morrison, the eventual Nobel laureate in literature who



was an editor at the publishing company Random House. A book that strove to contain the vast lives of Black people in the U.S.—their horrific experiences and their magnanimous achievements—*The Black Book* was a gift to the nation's children and grandchildren of slaves (and even inspired one of the greatest novels of all time, Morrison's *Beloved*). Likewise, in a time of immense death and thus plundering of families, Finney's latest book is a blessing for a continuously undone but never destroyed people, reaching into the past to grasp hope and self-worth to sustain their future.

The scope of *Love Child's Hotbed* is smaller than that of *The Black Book*. In her collection's introduction, Finney defines "hotbed" as "an area of decaying organic matter, heated earth ... favoring rapid growth"—and it doesn't take long for the hotbed of her book to make itself known: It is her family. Her father, who was the first Black chief justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court. Her mother, who was an educator. Her uncle Bobby, who helped create the groundbreaking Black doll Tamu and was so bold in being who God made him to be that he brought his boyfriend home with him to South Carolina. Finney highlights these loves and more via photos, prose reflections, newspaper clippings, and, of course, poems.

Yet Finney makes clear that her family doesn't stop at those who share her blood, but includes the white florist who spotted the Emanuel Nine shooter not long after his crimes and followed his car for 30 miles so he wouldn't get away; the "two nuns in full Catholic regalia" boarding a plane with Finney, one Black and one white and both wearing identical wedding rings, "their love for each other ... so public and so draped in the Catholic church"; and the 14-year-old Black boy George Stinney Jr., the youngest person to be executed in the U.S. since 1786 and of whom "in 1944, a reporter from *The State* newspaper in South / Carolina wrote that [he] was walked to his / death with a Bible underneath his arm" which he is "made to sit on ... / The electric chair was made for men and George was just / a boy."

Like a reporter, or the volunteer search team leader Finney once was during the 1979 to 1981 Atlanta child



**"THEY TAKE
YOU FROM ME,"
FINNEY WRITES,
"LIKE IT'S
NOTHING TO TAKE
YOU FROM ME."**

murders, Finney scours the land to examine whether this hotbed we call "the United States of America" can actually cultivate love—take the family values it professes to hold so dear and turn that often false and stingy devotion into American abundance.

In doing so, she guides us to the fertile soil in our front yard, reflecting on the removal of the Confederate flag from the South Carolina State House; the brave activism, art, and queerness of *A Raisin in the Sun* playwright Lorraine Hansberry (who inspired Finney to become a writer and embrace her own lesbian identity); the fight by Stinney's surviving family to hold a corrupt criminal justice system accountable for the legal and lethal abuse inflicted upon him; and more.

COVID-19 does not appear in *Love Child's Hotbed*; I am almost certain that Finney, like many of us, had no idea the illness 2020 would bring. But in this sickness of coronavirus and unjust fatal force by police, of bigotry and shamelessness in a White House built by Black slaves, of legal impropriety and extreme right-wing hatred so massive that it has destroyed the validity of America's highest court and perhaps the entire governmental system from the top down, Finney does what her father hoped she would. She brings love, at a time when more than 600 migrant children are without their parents, souls separated by a presidential administration that lacks one.

"It is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind," states the Carter G. Woodson Center in Kentucky, defining the Ghanaian word "sankofa." Finney includes this definition in the "List of Artifacts" of *Love Child's Hotbed* and thus makes the intention of her fifth book of poetry immensely clear. In a year, a presidency, four centuries of European conquest of Black and brown bodies during which so much has been lost, let us not forget the families we had and have, the "truth and beauty," to quote Finney, that we, the people, hold.

"They take you from me," Finney writes, "like it's nothing to take you from me. Like taking you ... is not the end of my world."

A world destroyed, and yet still-churning waters, still-sailing ships. ✨

Da'Shawn Mosley is associate editor of *Sojourners*.

On Film



From
Crip Camp

FINDING CONNECTION IN ISOLATION

By Abby Olcese

For a year defined by isolation, 2020 has been fascinatingly full of stories about relationship. It feels oddly appropriate that during a time when we're constantly confronting our divisions—ideological and physical—we've been surrounded by cinematic reminders of the importance of community and the various ways we find it. Films of 2020 have come out largely through streaming platforms, and we've watched them in our homes, by ourselves. They've still managed, however, to inspire connection.

Kirsten Johnson's documentary *Dick Johnson Is Dead* chronicled her father's dementia by celebrating her dad's life, while Natalie Erika James' horror film *Relic* addressed the real-life existential terror of watching a loved one's mind fade to the same disease. Other films such as Spike Lee's *Da 5 Bloods* and Sofia Coppola's *On the Rocks* examined how adult children relate to their parents' flaws. Of course, family doesn't have to mean the people we share our genes with. Movies this year addressed found families too, from *Crip Camp*'s community of disability activists to *The Old Guard*'s fiercely devoted group of immortal warriors. Even popcorn fare such as *Bill & Ted Face the Music* celebrated the way long-standing bonds support us throughout our lives and help us in turn to love others.

There were many films that considered our societal connections and responsibilities to each other. David Byrne's *American Utopia* looked for ways to joyfully unite humanity through music, while calling attention to lives lost to systemic racism. Garrett Bradley's

moving documentary *Time* provided an intimate look at a family torn apart by mass incarceration. The 1968 anti-war protests of *The Trial of the Chicago 7* bore visual similarities to the Black Lives Matter protests of 2014 and 2020, placing a modern set of eyes on a historical example of injustice and police brutality (despite the film's factual inaccuracies).

When we're spending so much time separated from the world at large, it's important that we have reminders of our humanity—the ways we are outside of pandemic constraints and the connections we still need to cling to. Solitude is valuable for self-reflection, but the Bible reminds us that faith thrives in community, where we can learn from each other, lean on each other, and see the image of God in each other. We may not be able to go to movie theaters, but films still provide an emotional gathering place where we can individually process our thoughts. This year, perhaps more so than others, movies have been our social classroom, encouraging us to keep fighting and hold tightly to the people we love. ❖

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New & Noteworthy

A CHANGE IS GONNA COME

Regina King's film *One Night in Miami* is a reflective depiction of Black excellence and the crossroads faced by a generation's luminaries. Malcolm X, Cassius Clay, Jim Brown, and Sam Cooke consider their callings in this intimate imagining of a night that actually happened.

Amazon Studios



From *One Night in Miami*

A Way Forward

From Seneca Falls to Stonewall to Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Guthrie Graves-Fitzsimmons maps the traditions of progressive Christian activism in the U.S. A healing balm and a mobilizing guide, *Just Faith: Reclaiming Progressive Christianity* invites readers to the co-creation of a just world.

Broadleaf Books



Divine Disruptor

She Who Cannot Be Shamed, Tamed, or Contained, by Christena Cleveland, offers art and writings drawing on the history of the Black Madonna—"She Who Is Unapologetically Black." Cleveland's e-book, in dethroning "whitemale-god" from our collective psyche, helps to free us all.

ChristenaCleveland.com



GOD, MONSTERS, AND US

By
Faith-Marie
Zamblé



Curated

In the Greek mythology I was taught as a child, a recurring plot always struck me as deeply unfair. A god seduces—or rapes—a mortal woman, who either succumbs to the coercion or tries to resist. If she resists, she is punished.

If she gives in, a jealous goddess punishes her.

The fact that my classmates and I had to read these myths without being encouraged to deconstruct them still disturbs me. My desire is not to sanitize art nor neuter its political incorrectness, but rather to see people (especially children) realize their agency as readers, particularly in instances where misogyny should be questioned. Which is why the installation of Luciano Garbati's sculpture *Medusa With the Head of Perseus* in New York City represents a delightful inversion.

As the story goes, Medusa was a beautiful young woman, unfairly punished for being a victim of Poseidon's lust. Because the rape takes place in Athena's temple, Athena, believing her sanctuary defiled, turns Medusa into a monster. Medusa, now with snakes for hair, is so hideous that she can transform anyone who beholds her to stone. Perseus, a demigod himself, is tasked with killing Medusa, a duty he executes via beheading. A 16th-century bronze by Benvenuto Cellini, titled *Perseus With the Head of Medusa*, depicts Perseus in his moment of triumph. He holds Medusa's head aloft while

**HOW OFTEN DO WE SEE AN
ENTIRE NETWORK OF POWER
DISMANTLED BY THE
REMOVAL OF ONE PERSON?**

snakes emerge from her neck.

Garbati, an Argentine-Italian artist, reverses the tale by showing his *Medusa* victorious, sword in hand, fingers gripping Perseus' head instead. His *Medusa* seeks to rectify a narrative injustice, but in its ambition has become a contentious symbol of the #MeToo movement, perhaps unfairly so.

Garbati's critics have wondered why a woman wasn't chosen to create the sculpture, or why *Medusa* doesn't cut off Poseidon's head—two lines of inquiry I entertained and ultimately discarded. Garbati simply submitted a proposal for the sculpture, rather than responding to a prompt for a specifically political work. Perhaps a similar proposal from a woman would not have been seen as equally radical, but there's no way to know. To the second (more interesting) point, Garbati's choice to depict Perseus' death rather than Poseidon's has all the markings of a grim, but apt, metaphor for how oppressive systems work. Poseidon certainly deserves punishment. A concrete image of his downfall would be satisfying. Yet, how often do we see an entire network of power dismantled by the removal of one person? Rarely, even if they are a god or Harvey Weinstein—or the president.

I write this in the final days of a contentious election, when an end to overt cruelty and mendaciousness glimmers at the edges of our collective vision. A new administration is in sight. But even when that happens, I am reminded that Perseus was merely a product of his society, an agent of various political forces. Though his death in Garbati's *Medusa* might be justifiable in terms of Medusa's immediate claim to self-defense, it does nothing to change a society that turns women into demons and sanctions unbridled male folly. That charge, it seems, rests with us. ✖

Faith-Marie Zamblé is an artist, writer, and M.F.A. candidate in dramaturgy and dramatic criticism at the Yale School of Drama.



**DICKINSON DOES NOT SEPARATE THE
LIBERATION OF CREATION FROM
THE LIBERATION OF THE POOR.**

liberation of the poor but follows the vision of Jesus, in whom all creation—human and more-than-human—holds together. In a refreshing move, *The Green Good News* sheds the romanticism of creation care in favor of a biblically based environmental justice from the margins. Dickinson unequivocally offers a call to conversion from neoliberalism to solidarity with all oppressed creatures. This ecological conversion takes place at the heart of the Christian witness: the table.

Over a shared meal, threads of justice and health for all creation come together and enter our bodies. At the Last Supper, the shadows of empire and the looming crucifixion of Christ were held at bay by the liberating light of the bread and the wine. In this simple yet transformative act of ingestion, Jesus invites his followers into his new economy. It is an economy not driven by extraction and exploitation but by participation and membership in the health of all creatures. In participating in the shared meal, Christ followers ground

ourselves in this liberation, remembering where we stand in dependence and solidarity with all creation.

Just as climate change is tearing down things we love, so too is it tearing down the “corporatized, consumerist, individualistic orders that are striving to colonize the entire planet.” This apocalyptic crisis has peeled back layers of malice and greed, exposing their sinful foundations. Perhaps the climate crisis is also an opportunity to follow the path of Jesus Christ, who came not to bring sanitized, individualistic peace but to dismantle systems of empire. As Dickinson writes, “Like the current ecological crisis, the cross of Christ marks the site of both catastrophe and new hope.” ✦

Avery Davis Lamb (@averydavislamb) is studying the intersection of Christianity and the environment at Duke Divinity School and the Nicholas School of the Environment.

CATASTROPHE AND NEW HOPE

The Green Good News:
Christ's Path to Sustainable
and Joyful Life,
by T. Wilson Dickinson

Cascade Books

2020 was a year of ecological breakdown. Simultaneous climate disasters have roared, including the worst wildfire season in the history of California and, as I write this, the most active hurricane season on record in the Atlantic. Meanwhile, freak wind storms called derechos plagued the Midwest and heatwaves baked the Southwest. In the midst of such devastation, it can seem downright irresponsible to search for hope. Yet, the paradoxical call of the cross is that, in the deepest darkness, joyful and beautiful transformation might be possible.

In *The Green Good News*, T. Wilson Dickinson does not settle for platitudes of hope. He does not affirm, as is so tempting for Christians, that all will be fine because of faith in God. Instead, Dickinson finds good news in the possibility of a beautiful and joyful set of responses to ecological breakdown. With humble writing grounded in stories of his own life, Dickinson offers a reading of scripture that does not separate the liberation of creation from the

TELLING
IT TRULY

Brown Church:
Five Centuries of Latina/o Social
Justice, Theology,
and Identity,
by Robert Chao Romero

IVP Academic



A

As a Latina, I waited with eager anticipation for the publication of Robert Chao Romero's *Brown Church: Five Centuries of Latina/o Social Justice, Theology, and Identity*. As a historian, Romero is the best person to take us through the history of the Latin American church, and he tells it truly, not

wishing to shield the reader from the horrors of colonization. He begins with the exploitation and conversion "by the sword" that began under the rule of the Spanish conquistadores, who brought to the Americas their Roman Catholic faith—along with their hunger for gold and other resources. Early Catholic missionaries such as Friar Antonio de Montesinos and Bartolomé de las Casas sought to divorce the faith from the Spanish colonial project and condemned the latter with courage and fervor.

It is worthwhile to note that Romero brings his readers all the way to the present, introducing them to living Latinx theologians and their work. For many readers, his chapter on "Recent Social Justice Theologies of U.S. Latinas/os" will be a great resource for delving deeper into the works of living Latinx scholars and practical theologians. While the book heavily features male scholars and theologians, it was heartening to see this section highlight Mujerista theology and the work of Latinas doing theology—women such as Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, Sandra Maria Van Opstal, Noemi Vega Quiñones, and Zaida Maldonado Pérez.

Romero acknowledges the racial hierarchy instituted under Spanish rule that still governs Latin America today, but he makes a bold statement early on in the book: "Brown Christians reject the racist legacy of Latin America in all its manifestations." This statement may be aspirational—it is not a lived reality in most Latinx Christian communities and immigrant churches. In fact, the book itself, while called *Brown Church*, specifically excludes Indigenous and Afro-Latinx theologians while asserting that the term "Brown Church" includes them. A better title for this work might have been *The Mestizo/a Church*, since nearly every hero of the book is a Mestizo/a.

I would have loved to see Romero highlight the faith of Indigenous people prior to colonization as well as afterward—there is a rich tradition of Indigenous spirituality in the Americas that also deserves recognition. There's also a growing number of Afro-Latinx theologians and pastors using their voices to teach the scriptures from their perspectives and emphasize the erasure of their communities from Latinx narratives.

Overall, I greatly enjoyed Romero's book and would highly recommend it. For those of us of Latinx background or descent, it offers an affirmation that Latinx church history *is* church history. That, in itself, is a gift: It dignifies the faith of those who have historically lived on the margins and often have been told to accept Eurocentric theologies as the only acceptable interpretations of the Bible; it offers to the church the gift of seeing scripture and theology through our eyes. ✕

Karen González is a speaker, writer, and immigrant advocate who lives in Baltimore. She is author of *The God Who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong*.



SERIOUS CHANGE- MAKING

2020s Foresight: Three Vital Practices
for Thriving in a Decade of
Accelerating Change,
by Tom Sine, Dwight J. Friesen

Fortress Press

Tom Sine has served as a futures innovation consultant for various denominations and organizations and **Dwight J. Friesen** is associate professor of practical theology at the Seattle School of Theology and Psychology. They spoke with Sojourners associate editor Da'Shawn Mosley about their book *2020s Foresight*.

Sojourners: What motivated you to write this book?

Tom Sine: Essentially, a desire to write a more compelling book on the changes we're facing in this pandemic and recession. Churches rarely do forecasting. As a consequence, they're not ready for the next crunch. They care about their people, but they're not thinking, "What's going to happen to them as the recession gets worse?"

Dwight J. Friesen: Our book intends to say, "Listen, we don't have to be passive bystanders to whatever the new normal's going to be." We can be proactive.

How?

Sine: Church leaders seldom look over the fence into other churches or denominations. Can we create service projects, find nonprofits to partner with, so if people can't find jobs—postponing starting families and buying a house, and getting behind economically—they can get involved in the town, working for serious changemaking, starting neighborhood gardens, social enterprise ventures, and more?

Friesen: It's "We've got some resources. What are we being invited to do in the neighborhood?"

2020 has made community care so complicated.

Friesen: The daily news has been devastating. Unless we look honestly at the future in a way that gives us an imagination for what is possible, we're going to recoil and double down on old systems. I long for a new normal, but it's not just going to happen. This is our moment to act. A relational God is inviting us to participate in faithful presence in the ecosystem of reality, to listen and look at what kind of future we want. ♦

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Photo of Louisville Seminary DMin student Fr. John Pozhathuparambil courtesy of The Record newspaper.

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MEACHAM AT ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, CHATTANOOGA

By Kemmer Anderson



I rub my hand across the stone font
Where Jon Meacham took on the water
Of baptism and signed on to the cross
In an olive oil signature made for words.

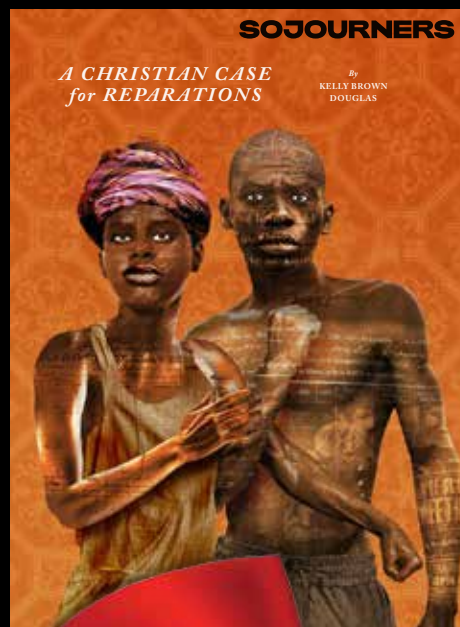
The empty sanctuary now quiet for prayer echoes
With last night's lecture on the future of democracy.
Light pours through the stained glass window
With a narrative of Saul, struck down blind

Like our leaders today who stone us with words
Or those sycophants who hold their coats in silence,
While sentences of lost reason spew poison
Through the politic that formed this nation.

Singing through this sanctuary, a noon sound
Of church bells plays "my country 'tis of thee."
History rings out through the sanctuary
In remembrance when the Founders supported

A document for union, written in the breach
As rivers rise to affirm our baptism to Freedom.

Kemmer Anderson taught for 40 years at McCallie School in Chattanooga, Tenn., where historian Jon Meacham went to high school.



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INCARNATION MEANS SOLIDARITY

Reflections on
the Revised Common
Lectionary, Cycle B.

By Isaac S. Villegas



Living the Word

These scriptures move with us from Christmas to Epiphany, drawing us into the mysteries of the divine life in the world. The incarnation is a call

to notice where the Spirit surprises us with God's presence. Dominican theologian Herbert McCabe guides our vision: "Christ is, indeed, to be found in the present but precisely as what is rejected by the present world," he writes. Christ "is to be found in those who *unmask* the present world, those in whom the meaninglessness and inhumanity and contradictions of our society are exposed." God's mysteries are revealed among the rejected and despised, the people who expose society's promises as the hypocrisies of political brokers who ensure the prosperity of the millionaires and billionaires—and, soon, the world's first trillionaire.

To believe these scriptures about God's presence is to realign our solidarities, to become conspirators with the One whose justice is liberation from the economic, political, and social patterns that are destroying life. These structures that organize our world for the benefit of the powerful are in the midst of collapse. They are "passing away," as Paul claims. We're always living through human self-destruction, with the United States as an instance of history's cycles of cataclysm. If we want to go on in hope, then we must love those God has created, and give ourselves to the despised and rejected, to our neighbors caged in prisons and segregated from us by the border. There, God will astonish us with epiphanies: life's survival on the underside of history.

Isaac S. Villegas is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship and president of the governing board of the North Carolina Council of Churches.

THE ONLY HOPE IS TO EMBRACE REPENTANCE AS A STRUCTURAL OVERHAUL.

JANUARY 3

WISDOM INCARNATE

SIRACH 24:1-12; WISDOM OF SOLOMON 10:15-21;
EPHESIANS 1:3-14; JOHN 1:1-18

For this week the Revised Common Lectionary includes passages from Wisdom of Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon, two books not in Bibles from some Protestant publishing houses, although most Christian traditions include them in the canon.

In Sirach, the power of God takes the form of Woman Wisdom who dwells in creation. She is like the mist, covering the earth with God's presence. She lives in the clouds, the pillars of the sky. She rides the waves of the sea. She has a tent in Jerusalem, where she lives with God's people.

With this biblical character as background for the prologue to John's gospel, the incarnation is a transgender moment in God's story. In John's gospel this Wisdom of God becomes the Word of God. Jesus the Word is Wisdom the woman. "Jesus is Sophia incarnate," writes Catholic theologian Elizabeth A. Johnson. A long-standing tradition in the church names this link between Wisdom and Jesus as Sophia-Christology. *Sophia* means "wisdom" in Greek. To talk about a Sophia-Christology is to talk about Jesus' identity as Sophia, as Woman Wisdom.

The Wisdom of Solomon retells the story of Exodus as the responsibility of Sophia, the one who delivered God's people from a nation of oppressors (10:15). She sheltered them with a cloud and guided them with a pillar of fire. The exodus from slavery was the work of Sophia, who led the people through the sea and into freedom. In Ephesians 1, Jesus incarnates Sophia's liberation in the church: Christ is our "redemption," our deliverance in his/her sharing with us of "wisdom" (verses 7-8). Christ is the Sophia of God, calling us into her work of liberation.

JANUARY 10

APOCALYPTIC SOLIDARITY

GENESIS 1:1-5; PSALM 29; ACTS 19:1-7; MARK 1:4-11

"And just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove" (Mark 1:10, NIV). The baptism of Jesus tears through the border between heaven and earth. The Greek verb here is *schizomenous*, having to do with

gashing something open, ripping apart. God slashes through the sky. This is the beginning of an apocalypse. Imagine scenes from the *Left Behind* books and movies: judgment unleashed from the heavens, fire and brimstone, cosmic devastation.

But this apocalypse doesn't initiate an inferno. Instead the Spirit of God swoops down—the Holy Spirit like the dove who returns to Noah on the ark with an olive leaf, a sign of life. The Spirit is like a bird at the beginning of Genesis who hovers over the waters, who broods over the oceans. The apocalyptic arrival of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism declares God's solidarity with earthly life, God's commitment to human community. The sky tears open to reveal that this Jesus will embody God's movement in the world. "You are my beloved," the voice announces. This one is God's love made flesh.

Baptism is our communion in this divine love, our union with Christ's life. In baptism we give ourselves to God's love—to be "caught up" in God's life in the world, writes Anglican theologian (and former archbishop of Canterbury) Rowan Williams, "so that we may grow into wholehearted love of God by learning that God loves us as God loves God." We are revelations of love, signs of God's delight in creation.

JANUARY 17

SILENT MYSTERIES

1 SAMUEL 3:1-20; PSALM 139:1-6, 13-18;
1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20; JOHN 1:43-51

"The word of the Lord was rare in those days" (1 Samuel 3:1). For a generation, the people knew only the silence of God—until one night when a voice startled Samuel. He thought Eli was calling, an elder in need of assistance. Eli wondered if this might be the night when God returned with a word of guidance. "If he calls you again," Eli told Samuel, "you shall say, 'Speak Lord, for your servant is listening'" (verse 9). Sometimes God speaks, but most often we listen to the mysteries of silence.

Dan Rather once asked Mother Teresa of Calcutta about her devotional life. "What is it that you say to God when you pray?" She answered, "I don't say anything; I just listen." Rather followed up: "What is it that God says to you during prayer?" Mother Teresa thought for a moment, "[God]

doesn't say anything. [God] just listens." Teresa and God, sitting together, both quiet, each listening to the silence.

In a letter to her spiritual director, Teresa confessed her doubts about God's presence. "In my soul I feel just that terrible pain of loss," she wrote, "of God not being God." She added, "If I ever become a saint, I will surely be one of 'darkness.'"

Prayer is patience in the darkness of night, listening for a voice.

JANUARY 24

GOD'S REIGN HAS COME NEAR

JONAH 3:1-5, 10; PSALM 62:5-12;
1 CORINTHIANS 7:29-31; MARK 1:14-20

Simon and Andrew drop their fishing nets, leaving their father alone to manage the family business. They abandon their responsibility to the social order, the economy, and family values, all because God's reign has come near. The advent of the gospel shifts their commitments, their allegiances.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul describes this shift as a "passing away" of the current "form of this world." The systems of power, the moral codes, the value structures—none of those deserve the deference of our political will or our economic lives. Instead, Paul writes, buy without possession and live without ownership. Deal with the world without making deals with the powerbrokers. Protest without a proposal for political reform. Because the form, the structure, the core of this order is a sham.

"Abolition is a synonym for the end of the world." With that line, historian Saidiya Hartman summarized the demands heard in the streets in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. The call to defund the police is what abolitionism sounds like today—to dismantle a world order built on genocide and enslavement, to disarm the officers who preserve imperial power. "Defund

PRAYER IS PATIENCE IN THE DARKNESS OF NIGHT, LISTENING FOR A VOICE.

the police,' and even calls to abolish the police," writes African American studies scholar Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor in *The New Yorker*, "seem like reasonable propositions when the institution appears immune to any more moderate reform."

The United States is the city of Nineveh in the story of Jonah. The only hope is to embrace repentance as a structural overhaul. The question for us is how we will love our neighbors as the present order passes away.

JANUARY 31

DEMONIC PUNISHMENT

DEUTERONOMY 18:15-20; PSALM 111;
1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13; MARK 1:21-28

Jesus sets people free. That's who Jesus is: God's liberation in the flesh. In Mark, Jesus liberates a person from demons, from a power that imprisons him, an unclean spirit that defiles him. Demons are emissaries of the dominion of sin—sin as a social order, sin as an overpowering violence. The ministry of Jesus, as the biblical scholar Matthew Thiessen explains in *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, is God's redemption of the world from "the demonic forces that plagued humanity."

The demonic is a way to talk about the reign of sin in our society and our lives, a system of sinfulness that rejects what is good for our neighbor and us. Sin is a power around us, invading our lives, possessing us, holding us captive, imprisoning all of us in a cage the size of the world.

When visiting people in prison, I've developed a practice of prayer that includes a word of exorcism. I offer an exorcism for the place—for God to cast out these demonic institutions from our society—and that Jesus would set the captives free. Incarceration and detention operate within the demonic realm of cruelty, of punishment as dehumanization. "Capture, imprisonment, is the closest to being dead that one is likely to experience in this life," George Jackson wrote from Soledad prison in 1970. Incarceration "was like dying," he explained. "Just to exist at all in the cage calls for some heavy psychic readjustments." ✱

"Preaching the Word," Sojourners' online resource for Bible study and sermon preparation, is available at sojo.net/ptw.

H'rumps



PICK UP THE PACE, BUT NOT THE TRASH

By Ed Spivey Jr.

Walking the empty streets of Washington, D.C., my hat pulled down against the wind and my face obscured by a fabric mask, I can't help but notice the unsightly trash on the sidewalk. Lately, the usual litter of the nation's capital—gum wrappers, empty fast-food containers, unsigned legislation for the common good—now includes a new item carelessly dropped. The formerly ubiquitous cigarette butt has been replaced by the discarded flossing pick.

While it's good that many people have stopped smoking, must they now floss and toss? Old cigarette butts might eventually compost into something useful to the earth. But plastic devices for cleaning teeth will be with us—much like a 6-3 Supreme Court—long after any possible use to society. And they're disgusting to look at. (Floss picks, not the Supreme Court, although [name withheld] is looking well past his freshness date.)

My guess is that former smokers have switched to floss devices to keep alive the rituals they so loved. And who can blame them? It's so satisfying to take a pick from a fresh pack, hold it *just so* between thumb and forefinger, and go to town on what's left from lunch. Maybe there should be designated areas outside office buildings where flossers could gather during breaks, bonding while prying out that troublesome piece of bagel and complaining about the boss. All the while looking relaxed and worldly as they move from tooth to tooth, then casually tossing the pick to the ground, followed by stepping on it with practiced vigor. Unfortunately, there's a lot of peer pressure to floss in public, but just because the cool people are doing it doesn't mean you have to. Think of the children.

Another item of trash I've noticed is the discarded surgical

STEP LIVELY AND BE AFRAID.

mask. It lays there in your path, flattened and soiled, waiting to be blown against a passing ankle by an errant breeze, its strings open like traps for the unwary. You walk around it to be safe, but you can't shake the troubling feeling it's permeated with viral spores—kept alive by the obliging seasonal chill in which they thrive—dormant only until human contact triggers them. If it gets on your shoe, how do you get it off? With a stick? Do you even *have* a stick? And if you find a stick nearby, how do you know it hasn't been used by somebody else against that very same mask?! The sidewalks may be empty these days, but they are not without risk or danger. (Which is why I always carry a stick.)

When it comes to masks, it's bad enough to have to wear the darn things. My usual friendly expression has been reduced to a practiced twinkle, which scarcely conveys my congenital positivity. And my eyebrows get sore from constantly arching them to convey a friendly manner. We're reduced to using our crow's feet to squint joy at seeing an old friend across the street, as we shout, "It's so good to see you. NO STAY RIGHT THERE, I'll catch you later, maybe next fall."

Actually, wearing a mask with sunglasses and a hat is a good look for me. It gives off a kind of *Invisible Man* vibe. Minimum face, maximum attitude. I'm thinking about wearing it even after the virus has been eradicated, which wannabe president-for-life Trump assured us will be any day now.

But back to that mask on the sidewalk. Why would it be abandoned? Given its crucial role in the world today, how does the wearer not notice its absence? Or did he (or she) just not care? Was he a scoff-er of science, a selfish denier who even now walks in the vicinity? *Wait*, was that a sneeze I just heard behind me, or a cough from an approaching stranger? I pick up my pace, scanning ahead for medical hazards and floss picks. Who knew a sidewalk could be so scary? (It's good to share. Maybe I won't have that dream again tonight.) ♦

Ed Spivey Jr. is art director of *Sojourners* magazine.

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